

POEMS

JOHN RUSKIN



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No. 1.  
GALAHAN.

*The Old Water Wheel*



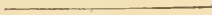
POEMS

BY

JOHN RUSKIN.

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

JAMES OSBORNE WRIGHT.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE poems collected in the following pages have been printed from the original published copies, great care having been taken to follow the author's text, with the exception of certain needed changes in the orthography.

It must be remembered that all of Ruskin's verse-making was confined to his youthful days, and was for the most part dated from Christ Church, Oxford, over the initials J. R. The first poem, "Saltzburg," was written in the author's sixteenth year, the last "The Glacier" but eleven years later. "The Broken Chain" was appropriately published at intervals—the first two parts appearing in 1840, the third in 1841, the fourth in 1842, and the fifth and last part in the year following.

All of these poems, with the exception of "Salsette and Elephanta," were published in the Annuals so popular during England's golden-age of steel engraving, but no collection was made until 1850, when the author issued a privately

printed edition, of such limited number, that copies have become virtually inaccessible except to the most rabid bibliomaniac, whose heavy purse enables him to successfully outbid competitors in the auction room and bookstore.\*

To those who appreciate the intense personality of the author, these verses will afford much insight into his character. The weird and somewhat melancholy train of thought which pervades all of his poetry is certainly remarkable, when we consider that it was written at an age that is popularly supposed to be under the influence of rose-colored visions rather than the grim churchyard aspect which pervades every line of these metrical effusions of the autocratic art-critic.

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\* Two years ago a copy sold by auction, in London, for 41 guineas.

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## SALTZBURG.

ON Salza's quiet tide the westering sun  
Gleams mildly ; and the lengthening shadows dun,  
Chequered with ruddy streaks from spire and roof,  
Begin to weave fair twilight's mystic woof,  
Till the dim tissue, like a gorgeous veil,  
Wraps the proud city, in her beauty pale.  
A minute since, and in the rosy light  
Dome, casement, spire, were glowing warm and bright ;  
A minute since, St. Rupert's stately shrine,  
Rich with the spoils of many a Hartzwald mine,\*  
Flung back the golden glow ; now, broad and vast,  
The shadows from yon ancient fortress cast,

---

\* The dome of the Cathedral of St. Hubert is covered with copper ; and there are many altars and shrines in the interior constructed of different sorts of marble, brought from quarries in the vicinity. St. Hubert, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated, was by birth a Scotchman.

Like the dark grasp of some barbaric power,  
Their leaden empire stretch o'er roof and tower.

Sweet is the twilight hour by Salza's strand,  
Though no Arcadian visions grace the land :  
Wakes not a sound that floats not sweetly by,  
While day's last beams upon the landscape die ;  
Low chants the fisher where the waters pour,  
And murmuring voices melt along the shore ;  
The splash of waves comes softly from the side  
Of passing barge slow gliding o'er the tide ;  
And there are sounds from city, field, and hill,  
Shore, forest, flood ; yet mellow all and still.

But change we now the scene, ere night descend,  
And through St. Rupert's massive portal wend.  
Full many a shrine, bedeckt with sculpture quaint  
Of steel-clad knight and legendary saint ;  
Full many an altar, where the incense-cloud  
Rose with the pealing anthem, deep and loud ;



And pavements worn before each marble fane  
By knees devout—(ah ! bent not all in vain !)  
There greet the gaze ; with statues, richly wrought,  
And noble paintings, from Ausonia brought,—  
Planned by those master minds whose memory stands  
The grace, the glory, of their native lands.  
As the hard granite, 'midst some softer stone,  
Starts from the mass, unbuttressed and alone,  
And proudly rears its iron strength for aye,  
While crumbling crags around it melt away ;  
So midst the ruins of long eras gone,  
Creative Genius holds his silent throne,—  
While lesser lights grow dim,—august, sublime,  
Gigantic looming o'er the gulfs of Time !

## FRAGMENTS

FROM A METRICAL JOURNAL.

### *Andernacht.*

TWILIGHT'S mists are gathering grey  
Round us on our winding way ;  
Yet the mountain's purple crest  
Reflects the glories of the west.  
Rushing on with giant force,  
Rolls the Rhine his glorious course ;  
Flashing, now, with flamy red,  
O'er his jagg'd basaltic bed ;  
Now, with current calm and wide,  
Sweeping round the mountain's side ;  
Ever noble, proud, and free,  
Flowing in his majesty.  
Soon upon the evening skies  
Andernacht's grim ruins rise ;

Buttress, battlement and tower,  
Remnants hoar of Roman power.  
Monuments of Cæsar's sway,  
Piecemeal mouldering away.  
Lo, together loosely thrown,  
Sculptured head and lettered stone ;  
Guardless now the arch-way steep  
To rampart huge and frowning keep ;  
The empty moat is gay with flowers,  
The night-wind whistles through the towers,  
And, flapping in the silent air,  
The owl and bat are tenants there.

*St. Goar.*

Past a rock with frowning front,  
Wrinkled by the tempest's brunt,  
By the Rhine we downward bore  
Upon the village of St. Goar.  
Bosomed deep among the hills,  
Here old Rhine his current stills.

Loitering the banks between,  
As if, enamored of the scene,  
He had forgot his onward way  
For a live-long summer day.  
Grim the crags through whose dark cleft,  
Behind, he hath a passage reft ;  
While, gaunt as gorge of hunted boar,  
Dark yawns the foaming pass before,  
Where the tormented waters rage,  
Like demons in their Stygian cage,  
In giddy eddies whirling round  
With a sullen choking sound ;  
Or flinging far the scattering spray,  
O'er the peaked rockş that bar his way.  
—No marvel that the spell-bound Rhine,  
Like giant overcome with wine,  
Should *here* relax his angry frown,  
And, soothed to slumber, lay him down  
Amid the vine-clad banks that lave,  
Their tresses in his placid wave.

## THE MONTHS.

### I.

FROM your high dwellings in the realms of snow  
And cloud, where many an avalanche's fall  
Is heard resounding from the mountain's brow,  
Come, ye cold winds, at January's call,  
On whistling wings, and with white flakes bestrew  
The earth, till February's reign restore  
The race of torrents to their wonted flow,  
Whose waves shall stand in silent ice no more ;  
But, lashed by March's maddened winds, shall roar  
With voice of ire, and beat the rocks on every shore.

### II.

Bow down your heads, ye flowers in gentle guise,  
Before the dewy rain that April sheds,  
Whose sun shines through her clouds with quick surprise,  
Shedding soft influences on your heads ;

And wreath e ye round the rosy month that flies  
To scatter perfumes in the path of June ;  
Till July's sun upon the mountains rise  
Triumphant, and the wan and weary moon  
Mingle her cold beams with the burning lume  
That Sirius shoots through all the dreary midnight gloom.

## III.

Rejoice ! ye fields, rejoice ! and wave with gold,  
When August round her precious gifts is flinging;  
Lo ! the crushed wain is slowly homeward rolled:  
The sunburnt reapers jocund lays are singing;  
September's steps her juicy stores unfold,  
If the Spring blossoms have not blushed in vain:  
October's foliage yellows with his cold:  
In rattling showers dark November's rain,  
From every stormy cloud, descends amain,  
Till keen December's snows close up the year again

## THE LAST SMILE.

SHE sat beside me yesternight,  
With lip, and eye, so blandly smiling  
So full of soul, of life, of light,  
So sweetly my lorn heart beguiling,  
That she had almost made me gay—  
Had almost charmed the thought away—  
(Which, like the poisoned desert wind,  
Came sick and heavy o'er my mind)—  
That memory soon mine all would be,  
And she would smile no more for me.

## SONG.

[From Leoni, a Romance of Italy.]

FULL, broad, and bright, is the silver light  
Of moon and stars on flood and fell ;  
But in my breast is starless night,  
For I am come to say farewell.  
How glad, how swift, was wont to be  
The step that bore me back to thee ;  
Now coldly comes upon my heart  
The meeting that is but to part.

I do not ask a tear, but while  
I linger where I must not stay,  
Oh, give me but a parting smile,  
To light me on my lonely way.  
To shine a brilliant beacon star,  
To my reverted glance, afar,  
Through midnight, which can have no morrow,  
O'er the deep, silent, surge of sorrow.



## SPRING.

INFANT Spirit of the Spring !  
On thy fresh-plumed pinion, bring  
Snow-drops like thy stainless brow—  
Violet, primrose—cull them now,  
With the cup of daffodil,  
Which the fairies love to fill,  
Ere each moon-dance they renew,  
With the fragrant honey dew ;  
Bring them, Spirit !—bring them hither  
Ere the wind have time to wither ;  
Or the sun to steal their dyes,  
To paint, at eve, the western skies.  
Bring them for the wreath of one—  
Fairest, best, that Time hath known.

Infant Spirit ! dreams have told  
Of thy golden hours of old,

When the amaranth was flung  
O'er creation bright and young ;  
When the wind had sweeter sound  
Than holiest lute-string since hath found ;

When the sigh of angels sent  
Fragrance through the firmament :  
Then thy glorious gifts were shed  
O'er full many a virgin head :  
Of those forms of beauty, none  
Gladden now this earth, save one !  
Hither, then, thy blossoms bring,  
Infant Spirit of the Spring !

## THE SCYTHIAN GRAVE.

THE following stanzas refer to some peculiar and affecting customs of the Scythians, as avouched by Herodotus (Melpomene 71), relative to the burial of their kings,\* round whose tombs they were wont to set up a troop of fifty skeleton scarecrows—armed corpses—in a manner very horrible, barbarous and indecorous ; besides sending out of the world to keep the king company, numerous cup-bearers, grooms, lackeys, coachmen, and cooks ; all which singular, and, to the individuals concerned, somewhat objectionable proceedings appear to have been the result of a feeling, pervading the whole nation, of the poetical and picturesque.

### I.

THEY laid the lord  
Of all the land  
Within his grave of pride ;  
They set the sword  
Beside the hand  
That could not grasp nor guide ;

---

\* These are the kings to whom the prophecies in the Old Testament refer :—“They shall go down to the grave with their weapons of war, though they were a terror to the mighty in the land of the living.”

They left to soothe and share his rest  
    Beneath the moveless mould,  
A lady, bright as those that live,  
    But oh ! how calm and cold !  
They left to keep due watch and ward,  
Thick vassals round their slumbering lord—  
Ranged in menial order all—  
*They* may hear, when *he* can call.

## II.

They built a mound  
    Above the breast  
Whose haughty heart was still ;  
    Each stormy sound  
    That wakes the west,  
Howls o'er that lonely hill.  
Underneath an armed troop  
    In stalwart order stay ;  
Flank to flank they stand, nor stoop  
    Their lances, day by day,

Round the dim sepulchral cliff  
Horsemen fifty, fixed and stiff—  
Each with his bow, and each with his brand,  
With his bridle grasped in his steadfast hand.

## III.

The soul of sleep  
May dim the brow,  
And check the soldier's tread,  
But who can keep  
A guard so true,  
As do the dark-eyed dead?  
The foul hyena's howl and haunt  
About their charnel lair;  
The flickering rags of flesh they flaunt  
Within the plague-struck air.  
But still the skulls do gaze and grin,  
Though the worms have gnawed the nerves within,  
And the jointed toes, and the fleshless heel  
Clatter and clank in their stirrup of steel.

## IV.

The snows are swift,  
That glide so pale  
Along the mountain dim ;  
Beneath their drift  
Shall rust the mail,  
And blanch the nerveless limb :  
While shower on shower, and wreath on wreath,  
From vapours thunder-scarred,\*  
Surround the misty mound of death  
And whelm its ghastly guard ;  
Till those who held the earth in fear,  
Lie meek, and mild, and powerless here,  
Without a single sworded slave  
To keep their name, or guard their grave.

---

\* It is one of the peculiarities of the climate, according to Herodotus, that it thunders in the winter, not in the summer.

## REMEMBRANCE.

I OUGHT to be joyful, the jest and the song  
And the light tones of music resound through the throng ;  
But its cadence falls dully and dead on my ear,  
And the laughter I mimic is quenched in a tear.

For here are no longer, to bid me rejoice,  
The light of thy smile, or the tone of thy voice,  
And, gay though the crowd that's around me may be,  
I am alone, when I'm parted from thee.

Alone, said I, dearest ? O, never we part,—  
For ever, for ever, thou'rt here in my heart :  
Sleeping or waking, where'er I may be,  
I have but one thought, and that thought is of thee.

When the planets roll red through the darkness of night,  
When the morning bedews all the landscape with light,  
When the high sun of noon-day is warm on the hill,  
And the breezes are quiet, the green leafage still ;

I love to look out o'er the earth and the sky,  
For nature is kind, and seems lonely as I ;  
Whatever in nature most lovely I see,  
Has a voice that recalls the remembrance of thee.

Remember—remember. Those only can know  
How dear is remembrance, whose hope is laid low ;  
'Tis like clouds in the west, that are gorgeous still,  
When the dank dews of evening fall deadly and chill.

Like the bow in the cloud that is painted so bright,—  
Like the voice of the nightingale, heard through the night,  
Oh, sweet is remembrance, most sad though it be,  
For remembrance is all that remaineth for me.



CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

NIGHT.

FAINT from the bell the ghastly echoes fall,  
That grates within the gray cathedral tower ;  
Let me not enter through the portal tall,  
Lest the strange spirit of the moonless hour  
Should give a life to those pale people, who  
Lie in their fretted niches, two and two,  
Each with his head on pillowy stone reposed,  
And his hands lifted, and his eyelids closed.

From many a mouldering oriel, as to flout,  
Its pale, grave brow of ivy-tressed stone,  
Comes the incongruous laugh, and revel shout—  
Above, some solitary casement, thrown  
Wide open to the wavering night wind,  
Admits its chill, so deathful, yet so kind,

Unto the fevered brow and fiery eye  
Of one, whose night hour passeth sleeplessly.

Ye melancholy chambers ! I could shun  
    The darkness of your silence, with such fear,  
As places where slow murder had been done.  
    How many noble spirits have died here,  
Withering away in yearnings to aspire,  
Gnawed by mocked hope—devoured by their own fire !  
Methinks the grave must feel a colder bed  
To spirits such as these, than unto common dead.

## ARISTODEMUS AT PLATÆA.

[OF two Spartans who were prevented by illness from taking part in the battle of Thermopylæ, and who were, in consequence, degraded to the level of helots, one, unable to endure the scorn of his countrymen, killed himself ; the other, by name Aristodemus, waited, and when, at the battle of Plataea, thirty-three thousand allied Greeks stood to receive the final and desperate attack of three hundred thousand chosen Asiatics, and the Spartans, unused to Persian arms, hung slightly back, he charged alone, and, calling to his countrymen to "follow the coward," broke the enemy's mass, and was found, when the victorious Greeks who followed him had laid two hundred thousand of their enemy dead on the field, lying on a low hillock, with his face turned up to heaven, a group of the Persian nobles lying slaughtered around him. He was refused the honors of burial, because, it was said, he was only courageous in despair.]

YE have darkened mine honor and branded my name,  
Ye have quenched its remembrance in silence and shame.  
Yet the heart ye call craven, unbroken, hath borne  
The voice of your anger, the glance of your scorn.

But the life that hath lingered is now in mine hand,\*  
My waiting was but for a lot of the land,

---

\* I Sam. xxviii. 21, Job xiii. 14.

Which his measure, who ruleth the battle array,  
May mete for your best and your bravest to-day.

My kinsmen, my brothers, your phalanx is fair,  
There's a shield, as I think, that should surely be there ;  
Ye have darkened its disk, and its hour hath drawn near  
To be reared as a trophy or borne as a bier.\*

What said I ? Alas, though the foe in his flight,  
Should quit me unspoiled on the field of the fight,  
Ye would leave me to lie, with no hand to inurn,  
For the dog to devour, or the stranger to spurn !

What matter ? Attendants my slumber shall grace,  
With blood on the breast, and with fear on the face ;  
And Sparta may own that the death hath atoned  
For the crime of the cursed, whose life she disowned.

---

\*[If his body were obtained by the enemy it would be reared as a trophy. If recovered by his friends, borne as a bier, unless, as he immediately called to mind, they should deny him funeral honors.]

By the banks of Eurotas her maidens shall meet,  
And her mountains rejoice in the fall of your feet ;  
And the cry of your conquest be lofty and loud,  
O'er the lengthened array of the shield or the shroud.

And the fires of the grave shall empurple the air,  
When they lick the white dust of the bones ye shall bear ;  
The priest and the people, at altar and shrine,  
Shall worship their manes, disdainful of mine.

Yet say that they fought for the hopes of their breast,  
For the hearts that had loved them, the lips that had blessed ;  
For the roofs that had covered, the country that claimed,  
The sires that had named them, the sons they had named.

And say that I fought for the land of the free,  
Though its bosom of blessing beat coldly for me ;  
For the lips that had cursed me, the hearts that had scorned,  
And the desolate hope of the death unadorned.

SALSETTE AND ELEPHANTA.

A PRIZE POEM.

---

“Religio . . . pedibus subjecta vicissim  
Obteritur. Nos exæquat victoria cælo.”

—LUCRETIUS.

'Tis eve—and o'er the face of parting day  
Quick smiles of summer lightning flit and play ;  
In pulses of broad light, less seen than felt,  
They mix in heaven, and on the mountains melt ;  
Their silent transport fills the exulting air—  
'Tis eve, and where is evening half so fair ?  
Oh ! deeply, softly sobs the Indian sea  
O'er thy dark sands, majestic Dharavee.\*  
When, from each purple hill and polished lake,  
The answering voices of the night awake  
The fitful note of many a brilliant bird,—  
The lizard's plunge, o'er distant waters heard,—

---

\* The southern promontory of the island of Salsette.

The thrill of forest leaves—how soft, how swift  
 That floats and follows where the night-winds drift ;  
 Or, piercing through the calmness of the sky,  
 The jungle tiger's sharp and sudden cry.  
 Yet all is peace, for these weak voices tell  
 How deep the calm they break but not dispel.  
 The twilight heaven rolls on, like some deep stream  
 When breezes break not on its moving dream ;  
 Its trembling stars continual watches keep  
 And pause above Canarah's haunted steep ;\*  
 Each in its path of first ascension hid  
 Behind the height of that pale pyramid,—  
 (The strength of nations hewed the basalt spire,†  
 And barbed its rocks like sacrificial fire.)  
 Know they the hour's approach, whose fateful flight  
 Was watched of yore from yonder cloudless height ?  
 Lone on its utmost peak, the Prophet Priest  
 Beheld the night unfolded from the East ;

---

\* The central peak of Salsette.

† M. Anguetil du Perron, in his accounts of Canarah, says that its peak appears to have been hewn to a point by human art as an emblem of the solar ray.

In prescient awe perused its blazing scroll,  
And read the records stretched from Pole to Pole ;  
And though their eyes are dark, their lips are still,  
Who watched and worshipped on Canarah's hill,  
Wild superstition's visionary power  
Still rules and fills the spirit of the hour :  
The Indian maiden, through the scented grove,  
Seeks the dim shore, and lights the lamp of love ;  
The pious peasant, awe-struck and alone,  
With radiant garland crowns the purple stone,\*  
And shrinks, returning through the star-lit glade,  
When breezes stir the peepul's sacred shade ; †  
For well his spirit knows the deep appeal  
That love must mourn to miss, yet fear to feel ;  
Low sounds, faint rays, upon the senses shed—  
The voices of the lost, the dark eyes of the dead.

---

\* "A stone painted with red, and placed at the foot of their favorite tree, is sufficient to call forth the devotion of the poor, who bring to it flowers and simple offerings."—J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

† The superstitious feeling of the Indian with respect to the peepul-tree is well known. Its shade is supposed to be loved and haunted by the dead.



How awful now, when night and silence brood  
O'er Earth's repose and Ocean's solitude,  
To trace the dim and devious paths that guide  
Along Canarah's steep and craggy side,  
Where, girt with gloom—inhabited by fear,—  
The mountain homes of India's gods appear !  
Range above range they rise, each hollow cave  
Darkling as death, and voiceless as the grave ;  
Save that the waving weeds in each recess  
With rustling music mock its loneliness ;  
And beasts of blood disturb, with stealthy tread,  
The chambers of the breathless and the dead.  
All else of life, of worship, past away,  
The ghastly idols fall not, nor decay ;  
Retain the lip of scorn, the rugged frown ;  
And grasp the blunted sword and useless crown ;  
Their altars desecrate, their names untold,  
The hands that formed, the hearts that feared—how  
cold !  
Thou too—dark Isle ! whose shadow on the sea  
Lies like the gloom that mocks our memory

When one bright instant of our former lot  
Were grief, remembered, but were guilt, forgot.  
Rock of the lonely crest ! how oft renewed  
Have beamed the summers of thy solitude,  
Since first the myriad steps that shook thy shore  
Grew frail and few—then paused for evermore !  
Answer—ye long-lulled echoes ! Where are they  
Who clove your mountains with the shafts of day ;  
Bade the swift life along their marble fly,  
And struck their darkness into deity,  
Nor claimed from thee—pale temple of the wave—  
Record or rest, a glory or a grave ?  
Now all are cold—the votary as his god,—  
And by the shrine he feared, the courts he trod,  
The livid snake extends his glancing trail,  
And lifeless murmurs mingle on the gale.

Yet glorious still, though void, though desolate,  
Proud Dharapori ! \* gleams thy mountain gate,

---

\* The Indian name for Elephanta.

What time, emergent from the eastern wave,  
 The keen moon's crescent lights thy sacred cave ;  
 And moving beams confuse, with shadowy change,  
 Thy columns' massive might and endless range.  
 Far, far beneath, where sable waters sleep,  
 Those radiant pillars pierce the crystal deep,  
 And mocking waves reflect, with quivering smile,  
 Their long recession of refulgent aisle ;\*—  
 As, where Atlantis hath her lonely home,  
 Her grave of guilt, beneath the ocean's foam ;  
 Above the lifeless hearth and guardless gate,  
 The wildly-walking surges penetrate,  
 And sapphire tints of phosphor lightning fall  
 O'er the broad pillar, and the sculptured wall.—  
 So, Dharapori ! through thy cold repose  
 The flooding lustre of the moonlight flows ;  
 New forms of fear, † by every touch displayed,  
 Gleam, pale and passioned, through the dreadful shade,

---

\* The interior of Elephanta is usually damp, and its floor covered with water two or three feet deep. By moonlight its shallowness would be unperceived.

† The sculptures of Elephanta have such "horrible and fearful formes that they make a man's hayre stande upright."—LINSCHOTEN.

In wreathed groups of dim, distorted life,  
In ghastly calmness, or tremendous strife ;  
While glaring eye and grasping hand attest  
The mocked emotion of the marble breast.  
Thus in the fevered dream of restless pain,  
Incumbent horror broods upon the brain,  
Through mists of blood colossal shapes arise,  
Stretch their stiff limbs, and roll their rayless eyes.  
Yet knew not here the chisel's touch to trace  
The finer lineaments of form and face ;  
No studious art of delicate design,  
Conceived the shape, or lingered on the line.  
The sculptor learned, on Indus' plains afar,  
The various pomp of worship and of war ;  
Impetuous ardor in his bosom woke,  
And smote the animation from the rock.  
In close battalions kingly forms advance,\*  
Wave the broad shield, and shake the soundless lance ;

---

\* "Some of these figures have helmets of pyramidal form ; others wear crowns richly decorated with jewels ; others display large bushy ringlets of curled or flowing hair. In their hands they grasp sceptres and shields, the symbols of justice and the ensigns of religion, the wea-

With dreadful crests adorned, and orient gem,  
 Lightens the helm and gleams the diadem ;  
 Loose o'er their shoulders falls their flowing hair  
 With wanton wave, and mocks the unmoving air ;  
 Broad o'er their breasts extend the guardian zones  
 Broidered with flowers, and bright with mystic stones ;  
 Poised in ætherial march they seem to swim,  
 Majestic motion marked in every limb ;  
 In changeful guise they pass—a lordly train,  
 Mighty in passion, unsubdued in pain ;\*  
 Revered as monarchs, or as gods adored,  
 Alternately they rear the sceptre and the sword.  
 Such were their forms and such their martial mien,  
 Who met by Indus' shores the Assyrian queen, †  
 When, with reverted force, the Indian dyed  
 His javelin in the pulses of her pride,

---

pons of war and the trophies of peace.”—MAURICE, *Antiq. of India*,  
 vol. ii., p. 145.

\* Many of them have countenances expressive of mental suffering.

† Semiramis. M. D'Ancarville supposes the cave to have been excavated by her army ; and insists on the similarity between the costume of the sculptured figures and that of her Indian adversaries.—See *D'Ancarville*, vol. i., p. 121.

And cast in death-heaps, by the purple flood,  
Her strength of Babylonian multitude.

And mightier ones are there—apart—divine,  
Presiding genii of the mountain shrine :  
Behold, the giant group, the united three,  
Faint symbol of an unknown Deity !  
Here, frozen into everlasting trance,  
Stern Siva's quivering lip and hooded glance ;  
There, in eternal majesty serene,  
Proud Brahma's painless brow and constant mien ;  
There glows the light of Veeshnu's guardian smile,  
But on the crags that shade yon inmost aisle  
Shine not, ye stars ! Annihilation's lord \*  
There waves, with many an arm, the unsated sword.  
Relentless holds the cup of mortal pain,  
And shakes the spectral links that wreath his ghastly  
chain.

Oh, could these lifeless lips be taught to tell  
(Touched by Chaldean art, or Arab spell)

---

\* Alluding to a sculpture representing the evil principle of India ; he seems engaged in human sacrifice, and wears a necklace of skulls.

What votaries here have knelt, what victims died,  
 In pangs, their gladness, or in crimes, their pride,  
 How should we shun the awful solitude,  
 And deem the intruding footsteps dashed in blood !  
 How might the altar-hearths grow warm and red,  
 And the air shadowy with avenging dead !  
 Behold !—he stirs—that cold, colossal king !—  
 'Tis but the uncertain shade the moonbeams fling ;  
 Hark ! a stern voice awakes with sudden thrill !—  
 'Twas but the wandering wind's precarious will :  
 The distant echo dies, and all the cave is still.  
  
 Yet Fancy, floating on the uncertain light,  
 Fills with her crowded dreams the course of night ;  
 At her wild will æthereal forms appear,  
 And sounds, long silent, strike the startled ear :  
 Behold the dread Mithratic rite reclaim \*  
 Its pride of ministers, its pomp of flame !

---

\* Throughout the description of the rites of Mithra, I have followed Maurice, whose indefatigable research seems almost to have demonstrated the extreme antiquity, at least, of the Elephanta cavern, as well as its application to the worship of the solar orb, and of fire. For a detailed account of this worship, see MAURICE, *Indian Antiq.*, vol. ii., sec. 7.

Along the winding walls, in ordered row,  
Flash myriad fires—the fretted columns glow ;  
Beaming above the imitative sky  
Extends the azure of its canopy,  
Fairest where imaged star and airy sprite  
Move in swift beauty and entrancing light ;  
A golden sun reflected lustre flings,  
And wandering Dewtahs\* wave their crimson wings ;  
Beneath, fed richly from the Arabian urn,  
Undying lamps before the altar burn ;  
And sleepless eyes the sacred sign behold,  
The spiral orb of radiated gold ;  
On this the crowds of deep voiced priests attend,  
To this they loudly cry, they lowly bend ;  
O'er their wan brows the keen emotions rise,  
And pious phrenzy flashes from their eyes ;  
Phrenzy in mercy sent, in torture tried,  
Through paths of death their only guard and guide,

---

\* Inferior spirits of various power and disposition, holding in the Hindoo mythology the place of angels. They appear in multitudes on the roof of the Elephanta cavern.



When, in dread answer to their youth's appeal,  
 Rose the red fire and waved the restless steel,\*  
 And rushed the wintry billow's wildest wreck,—  
 Their God hath called them, and shall danger check ?  
 On—on—for ever on, though roused in wrath  
 Glare the grim lion on their lonely path ;  
 Though, starting from his coiled malignant rest,  
 The deadly dragon lift his crimson crest ;  
 Though corpse-like shadows round their footsteps flock,  
 And shafts of lightning cleave the incumbent rock ;  
 On, for behold, enduring honors wait  
 To grace their passage through the golden gate ; †  
 Glorious estate, and more than mortal power,  
 Succeed the dreadful expiating hour ;

---

\* Alluding to the dreadful ceremonies of initiation which the priests of Mithra were compelled to undergo, and which seem to have had a close correspondence with the Eleusinian mysteries. See MAURICE, *Antiq. of India*, vol. v. p. 620.

† The sidereal metempsychosis was represented in the Mithraic rites by the ascent of a ladder, on which there were seven gates : the first of lead, representing Saturn ; the second of tin, Venus ; the third brass, Jupiter ; the fourth iron, Mercury ; the fifth mixed, Mars ; the sixth silver, the Moon ; the seventh of gold, the Sun.

Impurpled robes their weary limbs enfold  
With stars enwoven, and stiff with heavenly gold ;  
The mitra\* veils their foreheads, rainbow-dyed,  
The measured steps imperial sceptres guide ;  
Glorious they move, and pour upon the air  
The cloud of incense and the voice of prayer ;  
While through the hollow vault, around them rise  
Deep echoes from the couch of sacrifice,  
In passionate gusts of sound,—now loud, now low,  
With billowy pause, the mystic murmurs flow  
Far dwindling on the breeze. Ere yet they die  
Canarah hears, and all his peaks reply ;  
His crested chasms the vocal winds explore,  
Waste on the deep, and wander on the shore.  
Above, the starry gloom is thrilled with fear,  
The forests shake, the circling hamlets hear,  
And wake to worship. Many an isle around,  
Assembling votaries swell the sacred sound,

---

\* The attire of Mithra's priests was splendid : the robes of purple, with the heavenly constellations embroidered on them in gold. They wore girdles representative of the zodiacal circle, and carried a golden sceptre in the form of a serpent. Ezekiel speaks of them as "exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads" (xxiii. 15).

And, troop by troop, along the woodland ways,  
In equal measures pour responsive praise :  
To Mithra first their kindling songs addressed,  
Lull his long slumbers in the watery west ;  
Next to the strength of each celestial sign  
They raise the choral chaunt, the breathing line ;  
Keen through the arch of heaven their hymns arise,  
Auspicious splendors deck the answering skies.  
The sacred cohorts, maddening as they sing,  
Far through the air their flashing torches fling ;  
From rock to rock the rushing glories leap,  
Climb the wide hills, and clothe the central steep,  
Till through the endless night a living line  
Of lustre opens on the bounding brine ;  
Ocean rejoices, and his isles prolong,  
With answering zeal, those bursts of flame and song,  
Till the strong vulture on Colombo's peak  
Awakes with ruffled plume and startled shriek,  
And the roused panther of Almorah's wood  
Howls through his violated solitude.

'Tis past,—the mingled dream,—though slow and grey  
On mead and mountain break the dawning day ;  
Though stormy wreaths of lingering cloud oppress  
Long time the winds that breathe—the rays that bless,—  
They come, they come. Night's fitful visions fly  
Like autumn leaves, and fade from fancy's eye ;  
So shall the God of might and mercy dart  
His day-beams through the caverns of the heart ;  
Strike the weak idol from its ancient throne,  
And vindicate the temple for His own.  
Nor will He long delay. A purer light  
Than Mithra cast, shall claim a holier rite ;  
A mightier voice than Mithra's priests could pour  
Resistless soon shall sound along the shore ;  
Its strength of thunder vanquished fiends shall own,  
And idols tremble through their limbs of stone.

Vain now the lofty light—the marble gleam—  
Of the keen shaft that rose by Gunga's stream !  
When round its base the hostile lightnings glowed,  
And mortal insult mocked a god's abode,

What power, Destroyer,\* seized with taming trance  
Thy serpent sceptre, and thy withering glance ?  
Low in the dust, its rocky sculptures rent,  
Thine own memorial proves thee impotent.  
Thy votaries mourn thy cold unheeding sleep,  
Chide where they praised, and where they worshipped weep.

Yes—he shall fall, though once his throne was set  
Where the high heaven and crested mountains met ;  
Though distant shone with many an azure gem  
The glacier glory of his diadem ;  
Though sheets of sulphurous cloud and wreathed storm  
Cast veil of terror round his shadowy form.  
All, all are vain ! It comes, the hallowed day,  
Whose dawn shall rend that robe of fear away ;

---

\* Siva. This column was dedicated to him at Benares; and a tradition prevailed among his worshippers, that as soon as it should fall, one universal religion would extend over India, and Bramah be no more worshipped. It was lately thrown down in a quarrel between the Hindoos and Mussulmans. (See *Heber's Journal*.) Siva is spoken of in the following lines, as representative of Hindoo deities in general. His worship seems to have arisen in the fastnesses of the Himalayas, accompanied by all the gloomy features characteristic of the superstitions of hill countries.

Then shall the torturing spells that midnight knew  
Far in the cloven dells of Mount Meru,  
Then shall the moan of frenzied hymns, that sighed  
Down the dark vale where Gunga's waters glide,  
Then shall the idol chariot's thunder cease  
Before the steps of them that publish peace.  
Already are they heard,—how fair, how fleet,  
Along the mountains flash their bounding feet !  
Disease and death before their presence fly ;  
Truth calls, and gladdened India hears the cry,  
Deserts the darkened path her fathers trod,  
And seeks redemption from the Incarnate God.

## A SCYTHIAN BANQUET SONG.

[THE Scythians, according to Herodotus, made use of part of their enemies' bodies after death, for many domestic purposes ; particularly of the skull, which they scalped, wrapped in bull's hide, and filled up the cracks with gold ; and having gilded the hide and parts of the bone, used the vessel as a drinking-cup, wreathing it with flowers at feasts.]

### I.

I THINK my soul was childish yet,

When first it knew my manhood's foe ;

But what I was, or where we met,

I know not—and I shall not know.

But I remember, now, the bed

On which I waked from such sick slumber

As after pangs of powerless dread,

Is left upon the limbs like lead,

Amidst a calm and quiet number

Of corpses, from whose cold decay

Mine infant fingers shrank away ;

My brain was wild, my limbs were weak,  
 And silence swallowed up my shriek—

Eleleu.

II.

Alas ! my kindred, dark and dead  
 Were those from whom I held aloof ;  
 I lay beneath the ruins red  
 Of what had been my childhood's roof ;  
 And those who quenched its wasted wood,  
 As morning broke on me, and mine,  
 Preserved a babe baptized in blood,  
 And human grief hath been its food,  
 And human life its wine.

What matter ?—Those who left me there  
 Well nerved mine infant limbs to bear  
 What, heaped upon my haughty head,  
 I might endure—but did not dread.

Eleleu.

III.

A stranger's hand, a stranger's love,  
 Saved my life and soothed my woe,



And taught my youth its strength to prove,  
To wield the lance, and bend the bow.  
I slew the wolf by Tyres' \* shore,  
I tracked the pard by chasm and cliff ;  
Rich were the warrior spoils I wore ;  
Ye know me well, though now no more  
The lance obeys these fingers stiff ;  
My hand was strong, my hope was high,  
All for the glance of one dark eye :  
The hand is weak, the heart is chill—  
The glance that kindled, colder still.

Elelen.

IV.

By Tyres' bank, like Tyres' wave,  
The hours of youth went softly by.  
Alas ! their silence could not save  
My being from an evil eye :  
It watched me—little though I knew  
The wrath around me rising slow,

---

\* Tyres, a river of Scythia, now the Dneister.

Nor deemed my love like Upas dew,  
A plague, that where it settled, slew.

My time approached ; I met my foe :  
Down with a troop he came by night,\*  
We fought them by their lances' light.  
On lifeless hearth, and guardless gate,  
The dawn of day came desolate.

Eleleu.

v.

Away, away—a Persian's slave,

I saw my bird of beauty borne,  
In wild despair, too weak to save,  
Too maddening to mourn.

There dwells a sound within my brain

Of horses hoofs' beat swift and hollow,  
Heard, when across the distant plain.  
Elaira stretched her arms in vain,

To him whose limbs were faint to follow ;

---

\* There were frequent incursions made by the Persians upon the Scythians before the grand invasion of Darius.

The spoiler knew not, when he fled,  
The power impending o'er his head ;  
The strength so few have tameless tried,  
That love can give for grief to guide.

Eleleu.

## VI.

I flung my bow behind my back,  
And took a javelin in my hand,  
And followed on the fiery track  
Their rapine left upon the land.  
The desert sun in silence set,  
The desert darkness climbed the sky ;  
I knew that one was waking yet,  
Whose heart was wild, whose eye was wet,  
For me and for my misery.  
One who had left her glance of grief,  
Of earthly guides my chosen and chief ;  
Through thirst and fear, by wave and hill,  
That dark eye watched and wooed me still.

Eleleu.

## VII.

Weary and weak their traces lost,  
I roved the brazen cities through ;  
That Helle's undulating coast  
Doth lift beside its billows blue.  
Till in a palace-bordered street,  
In the dusk starlight of the day,  
A stalkless flower fell near my feet,  
Withered and worn, yet passing sweet ;  
Its root was left,—how far away ?  
Its leaves were wet, though not with dew ;  
The breast that kept, the hand that threw,  
Were those of one who sickened more,  
For the sweet breeze of Tyres' shore.  
Eleleu.

## VIII.

My tale is long. Though bolts of brass  
Held not their captive's faint upbraiding,  
They melt like wax, they bend like grass,  
At sorrow's touch, when love is aiding ;

The night was dim, the stars were dead,  
The drifting clouds were grey and wide ;  
The captive joined me and we fled,  
Quivering with joy, though cold with dread,  
She shuddered at my side.

We passed the streets, we gained the gate,  
Where round the wall its watchers wait ;  
Our steps beneath were hushed and slow,  
For the third time—I met my foe.

Eleleu.

IX.

Swift answering as his anger cried,  
Came down the sworded sentinels ;  
I dashed their closing spears aside ;  
They thicken, as a torrent swells,  
When tempests feed its mountain source,  
O'er-matched, borne down, with javelins rent,  
I backed them still with fainting force,  
Till the life curdled in its course,  
And left my madness innocent.

The echo of a maiden's shriek,  
Mixed with my dreaming long and weak,  
And when I woke the daybreak fell  
Into a dark and silent cell.

Eleleu.

x.

Know ye the price that must atone,  
When power is mocked at by its slave ?  
Know ye the kind of mercy shown,  
When pride condemns, though love would save ?  
A sullen splash was heard that night  
To check the calm of Helle's flow ;  
And there was much of love and light,  
Quenched, where the foam-globes moved most white,  
With none to save and few to know,  
Me they led forth, at dawn of day,  
To mock, to torture, and to slay ;  
They found my courage calm and mild,  
Until my foe came near and smiled.

Eleleu.

## XI.

He told me how the midnight chasm  
Of ocean had been sweetly fed :  
He paled—recoiling, for a spasm  
Came o'er the limbs they dreamed were dead :  
The earth grew hot—the sky grew black—  
The twisted cords gave way like tow ;  
I felt the branding fetters crack,  
And saw the torturers starting back,  
And more I do not know,  
Until my stretched limbs dashed their way  
Through the cold sea's resulting spray,  
And left me where its surges bore  
Their voices to a lifeless shore.

Elelen.

## XII.

Mine aged eyes are dim and dry :  
They have not much to see or mourn,  
Save when in sleep, pale thoughts pass by—  
My heart is with their footsteps worn

Into a pathway. Swift and steep  
 Their troops pass down it—and I feel not—  
 Though they have words would make me weep  
 If I could tell their meaning deep—  
 But *I* forget—and *they* reveal not :  
 Oh, lost Elaira !—when I go  
 Where cold hands hold the soundless bow,  
 Shall the black earth, all pitiless,  
 Forget the early grave  
 Of her, whom beauty did not bless,  
 Affection could not save ?  
Eleleu.

## XIII.

Oh, lost Elaira ! long for thee  
 Sweet Tyres' banks have blushed in vain ;  
 And blight to them and death to me  
 Shall break the link of memory's chain.  
 My spirit keeps its lonely lair  
 In mouldering life to burn and blacken ;  
 The throbs that moved it once are there  
 Like winds that stir a dead man's hair,  
 Unable to awaken.



Thy soul on earth supremely smiled,  
 In beauty bright, in mercy mild,  
 It looked to love, it breathed to bless—  
 It died, and left me—merciless.

Eleleu.

XIV.

And men shrink from me, with no sense  
 That the fierce heart they fear and fly,  
 Is one, whose only evidence  
 Of beating is in agony.  
 They know, with me, to match or melt,  
 The sword or prayer alike are vain ;  
 The spirit's presence, half unfelt,  
 Hath left,—slow withering where it dwelt,  
 One precedence of pain.  
 All that my victims feel or fear  
 Is well avenged by something here :  
 And every curse they breathe on me  
 Joins in the deep voice of the sea.

Eleleu.

## XV.

It rolls—it coils—it foams—it flashes,  
Pale and putrid—ghastly green ;  
Lit with light of dead men's ashes  
Flickering through the black weed's screen.  
Oh ! there along the breathless land,  
Elaira keeps the couch allotted ;  
The waters wave her weary hand,  
And toss pale shells and ropy sand  
About her dark hair, clasped and clotted.  
The purple isles are bright above  
The frail and moon-blanch'd bones of love ;  
Their citron breeze is full of bliss,  
Her lips are cool without its kiss.

Elelen.

## XVI.

My thoughts are wandering and weak ;  
Forgive an old man's dotard dreaming ;  
I know not sometimes when I speak  
Such visions as have quiet seeming.

I told you how my madness bore  
My limbs from torture. When I woke,  
I do remember something more  
Of wandering on the wet sea-shore,  
By waving weed and withered rock,  
Calling Elaira, till the name  
Crossed o'er the waters as they came—  
Mildly—to hallow and to bless  
Even what had made it meaningless—  
Eleleu.

## XVII.

The waves in answering murmurs mixed,  
Tossed a frail fetter on the sand ;  
Too well I knew whose fingers fixed,  
Whose arm had lost the golden band ;  
For such it was, as still confines  
Faint Beauty's arm who will not listen,  
The words of love that mockery twines  
To soothe the soul that pants and pines  
Within its rose-encumbered prison.

The waters freed her ; she who wore  
 Fetter or armlet needs no more ;  
 Could the waves tell, who saw me lift,  
 For whom I kept, their glittering gift,  
Eleleu.

## XVIII.

Slow drifts the hour when Patience waits  
 Revenge's answering orison ;  
 But--one by one the darkening Fates  
 Will draw the balanced axle on,  
 Till torture pays the price of pride,  
 And watches wave with sullen shine,  
 The sword of sorrow justified.  
 The long years kept their quiet glide,  
 His hour was past : they brought me mine.  
 When steed to steed, and rank to rank,  
 With matched numbers fierce and frank,  
 (The war-wolves waiting near to see  
 Our battle bright) my Foe met Me.  
Ha--Hurra !

## XIX.

As the tiger tears through the jungle reeds,  
As the west wind breaks through the sharp corn ears,  
As the quick death follows where the lightning leads,  
Did my dark horse bear through the bended spears ;  
And the blood came up to my brain like a mist,  
With a dark delight and a fiery feel ;  
For the black darts hailed, and the javelins hissed,  
To the corpses clasped in their tortured twist,  
From mine arms like rain from the red-hot steel.  
Well went the wild horses—well rode their lords—  
Wide waved the sea of their circling swords ;  
But down went the wild steeds—down went the sea—  
Down went the dark banners—down went He.  
Ha—Hurra !

## XX.

For, forward fixed, my frenzy rushed,  
To one pale plume of fitful wave ;  
With failing strength, o'er corpses crushed,  
My horse obeyed the spurs I gave.



He knew his spirit was delivered  
 By the last nerve my sword had severed,  
 And lay—his death pang scarcely done,  
 Stretched at my mercy—asking none.

Elelen.

XXII.

His lips were pale. They once had worn  
 A fiercer paleness. For awhile  
 Their gashes kept the curl of scorn,  
 But now—they always smile.  
 A life like that of smouldering ashes,  
 Had kept his shadowy eyeballs burning.  
 Full through the neck my sabre crashes—  
 The black blood burst beneath their lashes  
 In the strained sickness of their turning.  
 By my bridle-rein did I hang the head,  
 And I spurred my horse through the quick and dead,  
 Till his hoofs and his hair dropped thick and fresh,  
 From the black morass of gore and flesh.

Ha—Hurra!

## XXIII.

My foe had left me little gold  
 To mock the stolen food of the grave,  
 Except one cirelet : I have told ,  
 The arm that lost, the surge that gave,  
 Flexile it was, of fairest twist :  
 Pressing its sunlike, woven line,  
 A careless counter had not missed  
 One pulse along a maiden's wrist,  
 So softly did the clasp confine.  
 This—molten till it flowed as free  
 As daybreak on the Egean sea,  
 He who once clasped—for Love to sever  
 And death to lose, received—for ever.

## XXIV.

I poured it round the wrinkled brow,  
 Till hissed its cold, corrupted skin ;  
 Through sinuous nerves the fiery flow  
 Sucked and seared the brain within.



The brittle bones were well annealed,  
A bull's hide bound the goblet grim,  
Which backwards bended, and revealed  
The dark eye sealed, the set lips peeled :  
Look here ! how I have pardoned him.  
They call it glorious to forgive ;  
'Tis dangerous, among those that live,  
But the dead are daggerless and mild,  
And my foe smiles on me—like a child.

## XXV.

Fill me the wine ! for daylight fades,  
The evening mists fall cold and blue ;  
My soul is crossed with lonelier shades,  
My brow is damp with darker dew ;  
The earth hath nothing but its bed  
Left more for me to seek, or shun ;  
My rage is passed—my vengeance fed—  
The grass is wet with what I've shed,  
The air is dark with what I've done ;

And the gray mound, that I have built  
Of intermingled grief and guilt,  
Sits on my breast with sterner seat  
Than my old heart can bear, and beat.

Eleleu.

XXVI.

Fill wine ! These fleshless jaws are dry,  
And gurgle with the crimson breath ;  
Fill me the wine ! for such as I  
Are meet, methinks, to drink with death.  
Give me the roses ! They shall weave  
One crown for me, and one for him,  
Fresher than his compeers receive,  
Who slumber where the white worms leave  
Their tracks of slime on cheek and limb.  
Kiss me, mine enemy ! Lo ! how it slips,  
The rich red wine through his skeleton lips ;  
His eye-holes glitter, his loose teeth shake,  
But their words are all drowsy and will not wake.

## XXVII.

That lifeless gaze is fixed on me ;

Those lips would would hail a bounden brother ;

We sit in love, and smile to see

The things that we have made each other.

The wreaking of our wrath has reft

Our souls of all that loved or lightened :

*He* knows the heart his hand has left,

*He* sees its calm and closeless cleft,

And *I*—the bones my vengeance whitened.

Kiss me, mine enemy ! Fill thee with wine !

Be the flush of thy revelling mingled with mine ;

Since the hate and the horror we drew with our breath

Are lost in forgiveness, and darkened in death.

## THE SCYTHIAN GUEST.

WHEN the master of a Scythian family died he was placed in his state chariot, and carried to visit every one of his blood relations. Each of them gave him and his attendants a splendid feast at which the dead man sat at the head of the table, and a piece of everything was put on his plate. In the morning he continued his circuit. This round of visits generally occupied nearly forty days, and he was never buried till the whole number had elapsed. I have taken him at about six days old when a little phosphoric light might play about his skin in the dark, and yet the corruption would not, in a cool country, have made anything shapeless or decidedly unpleasant.—See *Herodotus, Melpomene*, 73.

### I.

THE feast is full, the guests are gay,  
    Though at his lance-illumined door  
Still must the anxious master stay,  
    For, by the echoing river shore,  
He hears the hot and hurrying beat  
Of harnessed horse's flying feet,  
And waits to watch and yearns to greet  
    The coming of the brave.

Behold—like showers of silver sleet,  
His lines of lances wind and wave :  
He comes as he was wont to ride  
By Hypanis' war troubled tide,  
When, like the west wind's sternest stoop,  
Was the strength of his tempestuous troop,  
And when their dark steed's shadows swift  
Had crossed the current's foamless drift,  
The light of the river grew dazzled and dim,  
With the flash of the hair and the flight of the limb.

## II.

He comes—urged on by shout and lash,  
His favorite courser flies ;  
There's frenzy in its drooping dash,  
And sorrow in its eyes.  
Close on its hoofs the chariots crash,  
Their shook reins ring—their axles flash—  
The charioteers are wild and rash ;  
Panting and cloven the swift air feels  
The red breath of the whirling wheels,

Hissing with heat, and drunk with speed  
Of wild delight, that seems to feed  
Upon the fire of its own flying ;  
Yet he for whom they race is lying  
Motionless in his chariot, and still  
Like one of weak desire or fettered will,  
Is it the sun-lulled sleep of weariness  
That weighs upon him ? Lo ! there is no stress  
Of slumber on his eyelids—some slow trance,  
Seems dwelling on the darkness of his glance ;  
Its depth is quiet, and its keenness cold  
As an eagle's quenched with lightning, the close fold  
Of his strong arms is listless, like the twine  
Of withered weeds along the waving line  
Of flowing streams ; and o'er his face a strange  
Deep shadow is cast, which doth not move nor change.

## III.

At the known gate the coursers check,  
With panting breast and lowly neck ;

From kingly group, from menial crowd,  
The cry of welcome rings aloud :  
It was not wont to be so weak,—  
Half a shout and half a shriek,  
Mixed with the low yet penetrating quiver  
Of constrained voices, such as creep  
Into cold words, when, dim and deep,  
Beneath the wild heart's death-like shiver  
Mocks at the message that the lips deliver.

## IV.

Doth he not hear ? Will he not wake ?  
That shout of welcome did not break,  
Even for an instant on the trace  
Of the dark shadow o'er his face.  
Behold, his slaves in silence lift  
That frame so strong, those limbs so swift,  
Like a sick child's ; though half erect  
He rose when first his chariot checked,  
He fell—as leaves fall on the spot  
Where summer sun shall waken not

The mingling of their veined sensation,  
With the black earth's wormy desolation.  
With stealthy tread, like those that dread  
To break the peace of sorrow's slumber,  
    They move, whose martial force he led,  
Whose arms his passive limbs encumber :  
    Through passage and port, through corridor and court,  
They hold their dark, slow-trodden track ;  
    Beneath that crouching figure's scowl  
The household dogs hang wildly back,  
    With wrinkled lip and hollow howl ;  
And on the mien of those they meet,  
    Their presence passes like the shadow  
Of the gray storm-cloud's swirling sheet,  
    Along some soft sun-lighted meadow ;  
For those who smiled before they met,  
    Have turned away to smile no more ;  
Even as they pass, their lips forget  
    The words they wove—the hues they wore ;  
Even as they look, the eyes grow wet  
    That glanced most bright before !



## V.

The feast is ranged, the guests are met ;

High on the central throne,

That dark and voiceless Lord is set,

And left alone ;

And the revel is loud among the crowd,

As the laugh on surges free,

Of their merry and multitudinous lips,

When the fiery foamlight skims and skips,

Along the sounding sea.

The wine is red and wildly shed,

The wreathed jest is gaily sped.

And the rush of their merriment rises aloof

Into the shade of the ringing roof ;

And yet their cheeks look faint and dead,

And their lips look pale and dry ;

In every heart there dwells a dread,

And a trouble in every eye.

## VI.

For sternly charmed, or strangely chill,

That lonely Lord sits stiff and still,

Far in the chamber gathered back  
Where the lamps are few, and the shadows black ;  
So that the strained eye scarce can guess  
At the fearful form of his quietness,  
And shrinks from what it cannot trace,  
    Yet feels, is worse than even the error  
That veils, within that ghastly space,  
The shrouded form and shadowed face  
    Of indistinct, unmoving terror.  
And the life and light of the atmosphere  
Are choked with mingled mist and fear,  
Something half substance and half thought,—  
A feeling, visibly inwrought  
Into the texture of the air ;  
And though the fanned lamps flash and flare  
Among the other guests—by Him,  
They have grown narrow, and blue and dim,  
And steady in their fire, as if  
Some frigid horror made them stiff.  
Nor eye hath marked, nor ear hath heard  
That form, if once it breathed or stirred ;

Though the dark revel's forced fits  
Penetrate where it sleeps and sits ;  
But this, their fevered glances mark  
Ever, for ever, calm and dark ;  
With lifeless hue, and changeless trace,  
That shadow dwells upon his face.

## VII.

It is not pain, nor passion, but a deep  
Incorporated darkness, like the sleep  
Of the lead-coloured anger of the ocean,  
When the heaven is fed with death, and its gray motion  
Over the waves, invisible—it seems  
Entangled with the flesh, till the faint gleams  
Of natural flush have withered like the light  
Of the keen morning, quenched with the close flight  
Of thunder ; and beneath that deadly veil,  
The coldness of the under-skin is pale  
And ghastly, and transparent as beneath  
Some midnight vapour's intertwined wreath  
Glazes the green moonlight ; and a veined fire  
Seems throbbing through it, like a dim desire

Felt through inanimation, of charmed life  
Struggling with strong sick pants of beaming strife,  
That wither and yet warm not :—through its veins,  
The quenched blood beats not, burns not, but dark  
    stains  
Of congealed blackness, on the cheek and brow,  
    Lie indistinct amidst their frightful shade ;  
The breathless lips, like two thin flakes of snow,  
    Gleam with wan lines, by some past agony made  
To set into the semblance of a smile,  
Such as strong-hearted men wear wildly, while  
Their souls are twined with torture ; calm and fixed,  
    And yet distorted, as it could not be,  
Had not the chill with which it froze been mixed  
    With twitching cords of some strong agony.  
And the white teeth gleam through the ghastly chasm  
Of that strange smile ; close clenched, as the last spasm  
Of the wrung nerves has knit them ; could they move,  
They would gnash themselves to pieces ; from above  
The veiling shadow of the forehead falls,  
Yet with an under-glare the fixed balls

Of the dark eyes gleam steadily, though not  
With any inward light, or under-thought,  
But casting back from their forgetful trance,  
To each who looks, the flash of his own glance ;  
So that each feels, of all assembled there,  
Fixed on himself, that strange and meaning glare  
Of eyes most motionless ; the long dark hair  
Hangs tangled o'er the faded feature's gloom,  
Like withered weeds above a mouldering tomb,  
Matted in black decay ; the cold night air  
Hath stirred them once or twice, even as despair  
Plays with the heart's worn chords, that last retain  
Their sense of sorrow, and their pulse of pain.

## VIII.

Yet strike, oh ! strike the chorded shell,  
And let the notes be low and skilled ;  
Perchance the words he loved so well  
May thrill as once they thrilled.  
That deadened ear may still be true  
To the soft voice that once it knew ;

And the throbs that beat below the heart,  
And the joys that burn above,  
Shall bid the light of laughter dart  
Along the lips of love.  
Alas! those tones are all untold  
On ear and heart so closed and cold;  
The slumber shall be sound,—the night,—how long!  
That will not own the power of smile or song;  
Those lips of love may burn, his eyes are dim;  
That voice of joy may wake, but not for him.

## IX.

The rushing wine, the rose's flush,  
Have crowned the goblet's glancing brim;  
But who shall call the blossom's blush,  
Or bid the goblet flow for him?  
For how shall thirst or hunger's heat  
Attend the sunless track,  
Towards the cool and calm retreat,  
From which his courser's flashing feet  
Can never bear him back?

There, by the cold corpse-guarded hill,  
The shadows fall both broad and still ;  
There shall they fall at night,—at noon,  
Nor own the day star's warning,  
Grey shades, that move not with the moon,  
And perish not with morning.

## X.

Farewell, farewell, thou presence pale !  
The bed is stretched where thou shouldst be ;  
The dawn may lift its crimson veil,  
It doth not breathe, nor burn for thee.  
The mien of might, the glance of light,  
That checked or cheered the war's career,  
Are dreadless in the fiery fight,  
Are dreadful only here.  
Exulting hatred, red and rife,  
May smile to mark thine altered brow ;  
There are but those who loved in life,  
Who fear thee, now.

Farewell, farewell, thou Presence pale !

The couch is near where thou shouldst be ;  
Thy troops of Death have donned their mail,  
And wait and watch for thee.



## THE BROKEN CHAIN.

### *PART FIRST.*

#### I.

It is most sad to see—to know  
This world so full of war and woe,  
E'er since our parents failing duty,  
Bequeathed the curse to all below,  
And left the burning breach of beauty,  
Where the flower hath fairest hue,  
Where the breeze hath balmiest breath,  
Where the dawn hath softest dew,  
Where the heaven hath deepest blue,  
There is death.  
Where the gentle streams of thinking,  
Through our hearts that flow so free,  
Have the deepest, softest sinking  
And the fullest melody;  
Where the crown of hope is nearest,  
Where the voice of joy is clearest,

Where the heart of youth is lightest,  
Where the light of love is brightest,  
There is death.

## II.

It is the hour when day's delight  
Fadeth in the dewy sorrow  
Of the star inwoven night ;  
And the red lips of the west  
Are in smiles of lightning drest,  
Speaking of a lovely morrow :  
But there's an eye in which, from far,  
The chill beams of the evening star  
Do softly move, and mildly quiver ;  
Which, ere the purple mountains meet  
The light of morning's misty feet,  
Will be dark—and dark for ever.

## III.

It was within a convent old,  
Through her lips the low breath sighing,

Which the quick pains did unfold  
With a paleness calm, but cold,  
Lay a lovely lady dying.  
As meteors from the sunless north  
Through long low clouds illumine the air,  
So brightly shone her features forth  
Amidst her darkly tangled hair ;  
And, like a spirit, still and slow,  
A light beneath that raven veil  
Moved,—where the blood forgot to glow,  
As moonbeams shine on midnight snow,  
So dim,—so sad,—so pale.  
And, ever as the death came nearer,  
That melancholy light waxed clearer :  
It rose, it shone, it never dwindled,  
As if in death it could not die ;  
The air was filled with it, and kindled  
As souls are by sweet agony.  
Where once the life was rich and red,  
The burning lip was dull and dead,  
As crimson cloud-streaks melt away,  
Before a ghastly darkened day.

Faint and low the pulses faded,  
One by one, from brow and limb ;  
There she lay— her dark eyes shaded  
By her fingers dim :  
And through their paly brightness burning  
With a wild inconstant motion,  
As reflected stars of morning  
Through the crystal foam of ocean.  
There she lay—like something holy,  
Moveless—voiceless, breathing slowly,  
Passing, withering, fainting, failing,  
Lulled and lost and unbewailing.

## IV.

The abbess knelt beside, to bless  
Her parting hour with tenderness,  
And watched the light of life depart,  
With tearful eye and weary heart ;  
And, ever and anon, would dip  
Her fingers in the hallowed water,  
And lay it on her parching lip,  
Or cross her death damped brow :

And softly whisper,—Peace,—my daughter,  
For thou shalt slumber softly now.  
And upward held, with pointing finger,  
The cross before her darkening eye ;  
Its glance was changing, nor did linger  
Upon the ebon and ivory ;  
Her lips moved feebly, and the air  
Between them whispered—not with prayer!  
Oh ! who shall know what wild and deep  
Imaginations rouse from sleep,  
Within that heart, whose quick decay  
So soon shall sweep them all away.  
Oh ! who shall know what things they be  
That tongue would tell—that glance doth see ;  
Which rouse the voice, the vision fill,  
Ere eye be dark, and tongue be still.

## v.

It is most fearful when the light  
Of thoughts, all beautiful and bright,

That through the heart's illumination  
Darts burning beams and fiery flashes,  
Fades into weak wan animation,  
And darkens into dust and ashes ;  
And hopes, that to the heart have been  
As to the forest is its green,  
(Or as the gentle passing by  
Of its spirits' azure wings  
Is to the broad, wind-wearied sky) ;  
Do pale themselves like fainting things,  
And wither, one by one, away,  
Leaving a ghastly silence where  
Their voice was wont to move and play  
Amidst the fibres of our feeling,  
Like the low and unseen stealing,  
Of the soft and sultry air ;  
That, with its fingers weak unweaves  
The dark and intertangled hair,  
Of many moving forest leaves ;  
And, though their life be lost do float,  
Around us still, yet far remote,

And come at the same call arranged,  
By the same thoughts, but oh, how changed !  
Alas ! dead hopes are fearful things,  
    To dwell around us, for their eyes  
Pierce through our souls like adder stings ;  
    Vampyre-like their troops arise,  
Each in his own death entranced,  
Frozen and corpse-countenanced ;  
Filling memory's maddened eye  
With a shadowed mockery.  
And a wan and fevered vision,  
Of her loved and lost Elysian ;  
    \* Until we hail, and love, and bless  
The last strange joy, where joy hath fled,  
The last one hope, where hope is dead,  
    The finger of forgetfulness ;  
Which, dark as night, and dull as lead,  
Comes across the spirit passing,  
    Like a coldness through night air,  
With its withering wings effacing  
    Thoughts that lived or lingered there ;

Light, and life, and joy, and pain,  
Till the frozen heart rejoices,  
As the echoes of lost voices  
Die and do not rise again ;  
And shadowy memories wake no more  
Along the hearts' deserted shore ;  
But fall and faint away and sicken,  
Like a nation fever-stricken,  
And see not from the bosom reft  
The desolation they have left.

## VI.

Yet, though that trance be still and deep,  
It will be broken ere its sleep  
Be dark and unawaked—forever ;  
And from the soul quick thoughts will leap  
Forth like a sad, sweet-singing river,  
Whose gentle waves flow softly o'er  
That broken heart,—that desert shore ;  
The lamp of life leaps up before



Its light be lost to live no more ;  
Ere yet its shell of clay be shattered,  
And all the beams at once could pour,  
In dust of death be darkly scattered.

## VII.

Alas ! the stander-by might tell  
That lady's racking thoughts too well ;  
The work within he might descry  
By trembling brow, and troubled eye,  
That as the lightning fiery, fierce,  
Strikes chasms along the keen ice plain ;  
The barbed and burning memories pierce  
Her dark and dying brain.  
And many mingled visions swim  
Within the convent chamber dim ;  
The sad twilight whose lingering lines  
Fall faintly through the forest pines,  
And with their dusky radiance lume  
That lowly bed and lonely room,  
Are filled, before her earnest gaze,  
With dazzling dreams of by-gone days.

They come, they come, a countless host,  
Forms long unseen, and looks long lost,  
And voices loved,—not well forgot,  
    Awake and seem, with accents dim,  
Along the convent air to float ;  
That innocent air that knoweth not,  
    A sound except the vesper hymn.

## VIII.

'Tis past, that rush of hurried thought,  
The light within her deep dark eye  
Was quenched by a wan tear mistily,  
Which trembled though it lightened not,  
As the cold peace, which all may share,  
Soothed the last sorrow life could bear.  
What grief was that, the broken heart  
Loved to the last, and would not part ?  
What grief was that, whose calmness cold  
By death alone could be consoled ?  
As the soft hand of coming rest  
Bowed her fair head upon her breast,

As the last pulse decayed, to keep  
Her heart from heaving in its sleep,  
The silence of her voice was broken,  
As by a gasp of mental pain ;  
“ May the faith thou hast forgotten  
Bind thee with its broken chain.”  
The Abbess raised her, but in vain ;  
For, as the last faint word was spoken,  
The silver cord was burst in twain,  
The golden bowl was broken.

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*PART SECOND.*

I.

The bell from Saint Cecilia's shrine  
Had tolled the evening hour of prayer ;  
With tremulation, far and fine,  
It waked the purple air :  
The peasant heard its distant beat,  
And crossed his brow with reverence meet :  
The maiden heard it sinking sweet

Within her jasmine bower,  
And treading down, with silver feet,  
Each pale and passioned flower :  
The weary pilgrim, lowly lying  
By Saint Cecilia's fountain grey,  
Smiled to hear that curfew dying  
Down the darkening day :  
And where the white waves move and glisten  
Along the river's reedy shore,  
The lonely boatman stood to listen,  
Leaning on his lazy oar.

## II.

On Saint Cecilia's vocal spire  
The sun had cast his latest fire,  
And flecked the west with many a fold  
Of purple clouds o'er bars of gold.  
That vocal spire is all alone,  
Albeit its many winding tone  
Floats waste away—oh ! far away,  
Where bowers are bright and fields are gay ;

That vocal spire is all alone,  
Amidst a secret wilderness,  
With deep free forest overgrown ;  
And purple mountains, which the kiss  
Of pale-lipped clouds doth fill with love  
Of the bright heaven that burns above,  
The woods around are wild and wide,  
And interwove with breezy motion ;  
Their bend before the tempest tide  
Is like the surge of shoreless ocean ;  
Their summer voice is like the tread  
Of trooping steeds to battle bred ;  
Their autumn voice is like the cry  
Of a nation clothed with misery ;  
And the stillness of the winter's wood  
Is as the hush of a multitude.

## III.

The banks beneath are flecked with light,  
All through the clear and crystal night,  
For as the blue heaven, rolling on,  
Doth lift the stars up one by one ;

Each, like a bright eye through its gates  
Of silken lashes dark and long,  
With lustre fills, and penetrates  
Those branches close and strong ;  
And nets of tangled radiance weaves  
Between the many twinkling leaves,  
And through each small and verdant chasm  
Lets fall a flake of fire,  
Till every leaf, with voiceful spasm,  
Wakes like a golden lyre.  
Swift, though still, the fiery thrill  
Creeps along from spray to spray,  
Light and music, mingled, fill  
Every pulse of passionate breath ;  
Which, o'er the incense—sickened death  
Of the faint flowers, that live by day,  
Floats like a soul above the clay,  
Whose beauty hath not passed away.

## IV.

Hark ! hark ! along the twisted roof  
Of bough and leafage, tempest-proof,

There whispers, hushed and hollow,  
The beating of a horse's hoof,  
Which low, faint echoes follow,  
Down the deeply-swarded floor  
Of a forest aisle, the muffled tread,  
Hissing where the leaves are dead,  
Increases more and more ;  
And lo ! between the leaves and light,  
Up the avenue's narrow span,  
There moves a blackness, shaped like  
The shadow of a man.  
Nearer now, where through the maze  
Cleave close the horizontal rays :  
It moves—a solitary knight,  
Borne with undulation light  
As is the windless walk of ocean,  
On a black steed's Arabian grace,  
Mighty of mien, and proud of paece,  
But modulate of motion.  
O'er breast and limb, from head to heel,  
Fall flexile folds of sable steel ;

Little the lightning of war could avail,  
 If it glanced on the strength of the folded mail.  
     The beaver bars his vizege mask,  
 By outward bearings unrevealed :  
     He bears no crest upon his casque,  
 No symbol on his shield.  
     Slowly and with slackened rein,  
     Either in sorrow, or in pain,  
 Through the forest he paces on,  
     As our life does in a desolate dream,  
 When the heart and the limbs are as heavy as stone,  
     And the remembered tone and moony gleam  
 Of hushed voices and dead eyes  
 Draw us on the dim path of shadowy destinies.

## v.

The vesper chime hath ceased to beat,  
 And the hill echoes to repeat  
     The trembling of the argent bell.  
 What second sounding—dead and deep,  
 And cold of cadence, stirs the sleep  
     Of twilight with its sullen swell ?



The knight drew bridle, as he heard  
Its voice creep through his beaver barred,  
Just where a cross of marble stood,  
Grey in the shadow of the wood.  
Whose youngest coppice, twined and torn,  
Concealed its access worship-worn :  
It might be chance—it might be art,  
Or opportune, or unconfessed,  
But from this cross there did depart  
A pathway to the west ;  
By which a narrow glance was given,  
To the high hills and highest heaven,  
To the blue river's bended line,  
And Saint Cecilia's lonely shrine.

## VI.

Blue, and baseless, and beautiful  
Did the boundless mountains bear  
Their folded shadows into the golden air.  
The comfortlessness of their chasms was full  
Of orient cloud and undulating mist,  
Which, where their silver cataracts hissed,

Quivered with panting colour. Far above  
A lightning pulse of soundless fire did move  
In the blue heaven itself, and, snake-like slid  
Round peak and precipice, and pyramid ;  
White lines of light along their crags alit,  
And the cold lips of their chasms were wreathed  
with it,

Until they smiled with passionate fire ; the sky  
Hung over them with answering ecstasy ;  
Through its pale veins of cloud, like blushing blood,  
From south to north the swift pulsation glowed  
With infinite emotion ; but it ceased

In the far chambers of the dewy west.

There the weak day stood withering, like a spirit

Which, in its dim departure, turns to bless  
Their sorrow whom it leaveth, to inherit  
Their lonely lot of night and nothingness.

Keen in its edge, against the farthest light,  
The cold calm earth its black horizon lifted,

Though a faint vapour, which the winds had sifted  
Like thin sea-sand, in undulations white

And multitudinous, veiled the lower stars.  
And over this there hung successive bars  
Of crimson mist, which had no visible ending  
    But in the eastern gloom ; voiceless and still,  
Illimitable in their arched extending,  
    They kept their dwelling place in heaven ; the chill  
Of the passing night-wind stirred them not ; the ascending  
    Of the keen summer moon was marked by them  
Into successive steps ; the plenitude  
Of pensive light was kindled and subdued  
    Alternate, as her creseent keel did stem  
Those waves of currentless cloud, the diadem  
    Of her companion planet near her, shed  
Keen quenchless splendor down the drowsy air ;  
    Glowed as she glowed, and followed where she led,  
High up the hill of the night heaven, where  
Thin threads of darkness, braided like black hair,  
    Where in long trembling tresses interwoven,  
The soft blue eyes of the superior deep  
Looked through them, with the glance of those who  
    cannot weep  
For sorrow. Here and there the veil was cloven,

By crossing of faint winds, whose wings did keep  
Such cadence as the breath of dreamless sleep  
Among the stars, and soothed with strange delight  
The vain vacuity of the Infinite.

## VII.

Stiff as stone, and still as death,  
    Stood the knight like one amazed,  
And dropped his rein, and held his breath,  
    So anxiously he gazed.  
Oh ! well might such a scene and sun  
    Surprise the sudden sight,  
And yet his mien was more of one  
    In dread than in delight.  
His glance was not on heaven or hill,  
    On cloud or lightning, swift or still,  
    azure earth or orient air ;  
But long his fixèd look did lie  
On one bright line of western sky,—  
    What saw he there ?

## VIII.

On the brow of a lordly line

Of chasm-divided crag, there stood  
The walls of Saint Cecilia's shrine.

Above the undulating wood  
Broad basalt bulwarks, stern and stiff,  
Ribbed, like black bones, the grisly cliff.  
On the torn summit stretched away  
The convent walls, tall, old, and grey ;  
So strong their ancient size did seem,

So stern their mountain seat,  
Well might the passing pilgrim deem

Such desperate dwelling place more meet  
For soldier true, or baron bold,  
For army's guard or bandit's hold,  
Than for the rest, deep, calm, and cold,  
Of those whose tale of troublous life is told.

## IX.

The topmost tower rose, narrow and tall,  
O'er the broad mass of crag and wall;

Against the streak of western light  
It raised its solitary height.  
Just above, nor far aloof,  
From the cross upon its roof,  
Sat a silver star.  
The low clouds drifting fast and far,  
Gave, by their own mocking loss,  
Motion to the star and cross.  
Even the black tower was stirred below  
    To join the dim, mysterious march,  
The march so strangely slow.  
    Near its top an opening arch  
Let through a passage of pale sky  
Enclosed with stern captivity;  
And in its hollow height there hung,  
From a black bar, a brazen bell :  
Its hugeness was traced clear and well  
The slanting rays among.  
Ever and anon it swung  
Halfway round its whirling wheel ;  
Back again, with rocking reel,

Lazily its length was flung,  
Till brazen lip and beating tongue.  
Met once, with unrepeated peal,  
Then paused ;—until the winds could feel  
    The weight of the wide sound that clung  
To their inmost spirit, like the appeal  
    Of startling memories, strangely strung,  
That point to pain, and yet conceal.  
    Again with single sway it rung,  
And the black tower beneath could feel  
The undulating tremor steal  
Through its old stones, with long shiver,  
The wild woods felt it creep and quiver  
Through their thick leaves and hushed air,  
As fear creeps through a murderer's hair.  
And the gray reeds beside the river,  
In the moonlight meek and mild,  
Moved like spears when war is wild.

## x.

And still the knight like statue stood,  
In the arched opening of the wood.

Slowly still the brazen bell  
Marked its modulated knell;  
Heavily, heavily, one by one,  
The dull strokes gave their thunder tone.  
So long the pause between was led,  
Ere one rose the last was dead—  
Dead and lost by hollow and hill.  
Again, again, it gathered still;  
Ye who hear, peasant or peer,  
By all you hope and all you fear,  
    Lowly now be heart and knee,  
Meekly be your orison said  
    For the body in its agony,  
And the spirit in its dread.

## XI.

Reverent as a cowlèd monk  
The knight before the cross had sunk;  
Just as he bowed his helmless head,  
Twice the bell struck faint and dead,  
And ceased. Hill, valley, and winding shore  
The rising roll received no more.



His lips were weak, his words were low,  
 A paleness came across his brow ;  
 He started to his feet, in fear  
 Of something that he seemed to hear.  
 Was it the west wind that did feign  
 Articulation strange and vain ?  
 Vainly with thine ear thou warrest :  
     Lo ! it comes, it comes again !  
     Through the dimly woven forest  
     Comes the cry of one in pain—  
 “ May the faith thou hast forgotten  
     Bind thee with its broken chain.”

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*PART THIRD.*

I.

On grey Amboise's rocks and keep  
 The early shades of evening sleep,  
 And veils of mist, white-folded, fall  
 Round his long range of iron wall ;  
 O'er the last line of withering light  
 The quick bats cut with angled flight,

And the low breathing fawns that rest  
The twilight forest through,  
Each on his starry flank and stainless breast  
Can feel the coolness of the dew  
Soothing his sleep with heavenly weight :  
Who are these who tread so late  
Beyond Amboise's castle gate,  
And seek the garden shade ?  
The flowers are closed, the paths are dark,  
Their marble guards look stern and stark,  
The birds are still, the leaves are stayed,  
On windless bough, and sunless glade.  
Ah ! who are these that walk so late,  
Beyond Amboise's castle gate ?

## II.

Steep down the river's margin sink  
The gardens of Amboise,  
And all their inmost thickets drink  
The wide, low water-voice.  
By many a bank whose blossoms shrink

Amidst sweet herbage young and cold,  
Through many an arch and avenue,  
That noontide roofs with checkered blue,  
And paves with fluctuating gold,  
Pierced by a thousand paths that guide  
Grey echo-haunted rocks beside,  
And into caves of cool recess,  
Which ever-falling fountains dress  
With emerald veils, dashed deep in dew,  
And through dim thickets that subdue  
The crimson light of flowers afar,  
As sweet rain doth the sunset, decked  
Themselves with many a living star,  
Which music winged bees detect  
By the white rays and ceaseless odor shed  
Over the scattered leaves that every day lays dead.

## III.

But who are these that pass so late  
Beneath Amboise's echoing gate,

And seek the sweet path, poplar-shaded,  
By breeze and moonbeam uninvaded ?  
They are two forms, that move like one,  
    Each to the music of the other's lips,  
The cold night thrilling with the tone  
    Of their low words—the grey eclipse,  
Cast from the tangled boughs above.  
Their dark eyes penetrate with love ;  
    Two forms, one crested, calm, and proud,  
Yet with bowed head, and gentle ear inclining  
    To her who moves as in a sable cloud  
Of her own waving hair—the star-flowers shining  
    Through its soft waves, like planets when they keep  
Reflected watch beneath the sunless deep.

## IV.

Her brow is pure and pale, her eyes  
    Deep as the unfathomed sky,  
Her lips, from which the sweet words rise  
Like flames from incensed sacrifice,  
    Quiver with untold thoughts, that lie

Burning beneath their crimson glow,  
As mute and deathless lightnings sleep  
At sunset, where the dyes are deep

On Rosa's purple snow ;

She moves all beautiful and bright,  
With little in that form of light  
To set the seal of mortal birth,

Or own her earthy—of the earth,  
Unless it be one strange quick trace

That checks the glory of her face,

A wayward meaning, dimly shed,

A shadow, scarcely felt, ere fled ;

A spot upon the brow, a spark

Under those eyes subdued and dark ;

A low short discord in the tone

Of music round her being thrown ;

A mystery more conceived than seen ;

A wildness of the word and mien ;

The sign of wilder work within,

Which may be sorrow—must be sin.

## V.

Slowly they moved that knight and dame,  
Where hanging thickets quench and tame  
    The rivers flash and cry ;  
Mellowed among the leafage came  
Its thunder voice—its flakes of flame  
    Drifted undisturbing by,  
    Sunk to a twilight and a sigh.  
Their path was o'er the entangled rest  
    Of dark night flowers that underneath  
Their feet as their dim bells were pressed,  
    Sent up warm pulses of soft breath.  
Ranged in sepulchral ranks above,  
Grey spires of shadowy cypress clove,  
With many a shaft of sacred gloom,  
The evening heaven's mysterious dome ;  
Slowly above their columns keen  
Rolled on its path that starred serene ;  
A thousand fountains soundless flow  
With imaged azure moved below ;

And through the grove and o'er the tide  
Pale forms appeared to watch, to glide,  
O'er whose faint limbs the evening sky  
Had cast like life its crimson dye ;  
Was it not life—so bright—so weak—  
That flushed the bloodless brow and cheek,  
And bade the lips of wreathed stone  
Kindle to all but breath and tone ?  
It moved—it heaved—that stainless breast !  
Ah ! what can break such marble rest ?  
It was a shade that passed—a shade,  
It was not bird nor bough that made,  
Nor dancing leaf, nor falling fruit,  
For where it moves—that shadow, gray and chill,  
The birds are lulled—the leaves are mute—  
The air is cold and still.

## VI.

Slowly they moved, that dame and knight,  
As one by one the stars grew bright ;  
Fondly they moved—they did not mark  
They had a follower strange and dark.

Just where the leaves their feet disturbed  
Sunk from their whispering tune,  
(It seemed beneath a fear that curbed  
Their motion very soon),  
A shadow fell upon them, cast  
By a less visible form that passed  
Between them and the moon.  
Was it a fountain's falling shiver ?  
It moveth on—it will not stay—  
Was it a mist wreath of the river ?  
The mist hath melted all away,  
And the risen moon is full and clear,  
And the moving shadow is marked and near.  
See ! where the dead leaves felt it pass,  
There are footsteps left on the bended grass—  
Footsteps as of an armed heel,  
Heavy with links of burning steel.

## VII.

Fondly they moved, that dame and knight,  
By the gliding river's billow light,



Their lips were mute, their hands were given,  
Their hearts did hardly stir,  
The maid had raised her eyes to heaven,  
But his were fallen on her.

They did not heed, they did not fear  
That follower strange that trod so near,  
An armed form whose cloudy mail  
Flashed as it moved with radiance pale ;  
So gleams the moonlit torrent through  
It's glacier's deep transparent blue ;  
Quivering and keen its steps of pride  
Shook the sheathed lightning at its side,  
And waved its dark and drifted plume,  
Like fires that haunt the unholy tomb  
Where cursed with crime the mouldering dead,  
Lie restless in their robes of lead.

What eye shall seek, what soul can trace  
The deep death-horror of its face ?  
The trackless, livid smile that played  
Beneath the casque's concealing shade ;  
The angered eye's unfathomed glare,  
(So sleep the fountains of despair,

Beneath the soul whose sins unseal,  
The wells of all it fears to feel.)  
The sunk, unseen, all-seeing gloom,  
Scarred with the ravage of the tomb,  
The passions that made life their prey,  
Fixed on the feature's last decay,  
The pangs that made the human heart their slave,  
Frozen on the changeless aspect of the grave.

## VIII.

And still it followed where they went,  
That unregarding pair ;  
It kept on them its eyes intent,  
And from their glance the sickened air  
Shrank, as if tortured. Slow, how slow,  
The knight and lady trod ;  
You had heard their hearts beat just as loud  
As their footsteps on the sod.  
They paused at length in a leafless place,  
Where the moonlight shone on the maiden's face ;

Still as an image of stone she stood,  
Though the heave of her breath, and the beat of her  
    blood  
Murmured and mantled to and fro,  
Like the billows that heave on a hill of snow,  
When the midnight winds are short and low.  
The words of her lover came burning and deep,  
    And his hand was raised to the holy sky ;  
Can the lamps of the universe bear or keep,  
    False witness or record on high ?  
He starts to his feet from the spot where he knelt,  
What voice hath he heard, what fear hath he felt ?  
His lips in their silence are bloodless and dry,  
And the love-light fails from his glazed eye.

## IX.

Well might he quail, for full displayed  
Before him rose that dreadful shade,  
And o'er his mute and trembling trance  
Waved its pale crest and quivering lance ;  
And traced, with pangs of sudden pain,  
The form of words upon his brain ;

“ Thy vows are deep, but still thou bears't the chain,  
Cast on thee by a deeper—vowed in vain ;  
Thy love is fair, but fairer forms are laid,  
Cold and forgotten, in the cypress shade ;  
Thy arm is strong, but arms of stronger trust,  
Repose unnerved, undreaded in the dust ;  
Around thy lance shall bend the living brave,  
Then arm thee for the challenge of the grave.”

## X.

The sound had ceased, the shape had passed away,  
Silent the air and pure the planet's ray.  
They stood beneath the lonely breathing night,  
The lovely lady and the lofty knight ;  
He moved in shuddering silence by her side,  
Or wild and wandering to her words replied,  
Shunning her anxious eyes on his that bent :  
“ Thou didst not see it, 'twas to me 'twas sent.  
To me,—but why to me ?—I knew it not,  
It was no dream, it stood upon the spot,

Where"— Then with lighter tone and bitter smile,  
"Nothing, beloved,—a pang that did beguile  
My spirit of its strength, a dream, a thought,  
A fancy of the night." And though she sought  
More reason of his dread, he heard her not,  
For, mingling with those words of phantom fear,  
There was another echo in his ear,  
An under murmur deep and clear,  
The faint low sob of one in pain,  
"May the faith thou hast forgotten  
Bind thee with its broken chain."

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*PART FOURTH.*

I.

'Tis morn!—in clustered rays increased—  
Exulting rays, that deeply drink  
The starlight of the East,  
And strew with crocus dyes the brink  
Of those blue streams that pause and sink

Far underneath their heavenly strand—  
Soft capes of vapour, ribbed like sand.  
Along the Loire white sails are flashing,  
Through stars of spray their dark oars dashing ;  
The rocks are reddening one by one,  
The purple sandbanks flushed with sun,  
And crowned with fire on crags and keep,  
Amboise ! above thy lifted steep,  
Far lightning o'er the subject vale,  
Blaze thy broad range of ramparts pale !  
Through distance azure as the sky,  
That vale sends up its morning cry.  
From countless leaves, that shaking shade  
Its tangled paths of pillared glade,  
And ceaseless fan, with quivering cool,  
Each gentle stream and slumbrous pool,  
That catch the leaf-song as they flow,  
In tinkling echo pure and low,  
\* Clear, deep, and moving, as the night.  
And starred with orbs of lily light.

Nor are they leaves alone that sing,  
Nor waves alone that flow ;  
The leaves are lifted on the wing  
Of voices from below ;  
The waters keep, with shade subdued,  
The image of a multitude—  
A merry crowd promiscuous met,  
Of every age and heart united—  
Gray hairs with golden twined, and yet  
With equal mien and eyes delighted,  
With thoughts that mix, and hands that lock,  
Behold they tread, with hurrying feet,  
Along the thousand paths that meet  
Beneath Amboise's rock ;  
For there upon the meadows wide,  
That couch along the river-side,  
Are pitched a snowy flock  
Of warrior tents, like clouds that rest,  
Through champaigns of the quiet west,  
When, far in distance, stretched serene,  
The evening sky lies calm and green.

Amboise's lord must bear to-day  
His love-gage through the rival fray ;  
Through all the coasts of fiery France  
    His challenge shook the air,  
That none could break so true a lance,  
    Nor for a dame so fair.

## II.

The lists are circled round with shields,  
    Like lily-leaves that lie  
On forest pools in clustered fields  
    Of countless company.  
But every buckler's bosses black  
Dash the full beams of morning back,  
In orbèd wave of welded lines,  
With mingled blaze of crimson signs,  
    And light of lineage high :  
As sounds that gush when thoughts are strong,  
    But words are weak with tears,  
Awoke, above the warrior throng,  
    The wind among the spears ;



Afar in hollow surge they shook,  
As reeds along some summer brook,  
Glancing beneath the July moon,  
All bowed and touched in pleasant tune ;  
Their steely lightning passed and played  
Alternate with the cloudy shade  
Of crested casques, and flying flakes  
Of horse-manes, twined like sable snakes,  
And misty plumes in darkness drifted,  
And chargèd banners broadly lifted,  
Purpling the air with storm-tints cast  
Down through their undulation vast,  
Wide the billowy army strewing,  
    Like to flags of victory  
From some wretched Armada's ruin,  
    Left to robe the sea.

## III.

As the morning star new risen  
    In a circle of calm sky,  
Where the white clouds stand to listen  
    For the spherèd melody

Of her planetary path,  
And her soft rays pierce the wrath  
Of the night storms stretched below,  
Till they sink like wreaths of snow,  
(Lighting heaven with their decay)  
    Into sudden silentness—  
    Throned above the stormy stress  
Of that knightly host's array,  
    Goddess-formed, as one whom mortals  
Need but gaze on to obey,  
    Distant seen, as through the portals  
Of some temple gray ;  
    The glory of a marble dream,  
Kindling the eyes that gaze, the lips that pray—  
    One gentle lady sat, retiring but supreme.

## IV.

Upon her brow there was no crown,  
    Upon her robe no gem ;  
Yet few were there who would not own  
    Her queen of earth, and them,

Because that brow was crown'd with light

As with a diadem,

And her quick thoughts, as they did rise,

Were in the deep change of her eyes,

Traced one by one, as stars that start

Out of the orb'd peace of night,

Still drooping as they dart,

And her sweet limbs shone heavenly bright,

Following with undulation white,

The heaving of her heart.

High she sat, and all apart,

Meek of mien, with eyes declined,

Less like one of mortal mind,

Than some changeless spirit shrined

In the memories of men,

Whom the passions of its kind

Cannot hurt nor move again.

v.

High she sat in meekness shaming,

All of best and brightest there,

Till the herald's voice, proclaiming

Her the fairest of the fair,  
Rang along the morning air ;  
And then she started, and that shade,  
Which in the moonlit garden glade  
Had marked her with its mortal stain,  
Did pass upon her face again,  
And in her eye a sudden flash  
Came and was gone ; but it were rash  
To say if it were pride or pain ;  
And on her lips a smile, scarce worn,  
Less, as it seemed, of joy than scorn,  
Was with a strange quick quivering mixed,  
Which passed away, and left them fixed  
In calm, persisting, colorless,  
Perchance too perfect to be peace  
A moment more, and still serene  
Returned, yet changed—her mood and mien ;  
What eye that traceless change could tell,  
Slight, transient,—but unspeakable !  
She sat, divine of soul and brow ;  
It passed,—and all is human now

## VI.

The multitude, with loud acclaim,  
Caught up the lovely lady's name ;  
Thrice round the lists arose the cry ;  
But when it sunk, and all the sky  
Grew doubly silent by its loss,  
A slow strange murmur came across  
The waves of the reposing air,  
A deep, soft voice that everywhere  
Arose at once, so lowly clear,  
That each seemed in himself to hear  
Alone, and fixed with sweet surprise,  
Did ask around him, with his eyes,  
If t'were not some dream-music dim  
And false, that only rose for him.

## VII.

“ Oh, lady Queen,—Oh, lady Queen !  
Fairest of all who tread  
The soft earth carpet green,  
Or breathe the blessings shed

By the stars and tempest free ;  
Know thou, oh, lady Queen,  
Earth hath borne, sun hath seen,  
Fairer than thee.

“ The flush of beauty burneth  
In the palaces of earth,  
But thy lifted spirit scorneth  
All match of mortal birth :  
And the nymph of the hill,  
And the naiad of the sea,  
Were of beauty quenched and chill,  
Beside thee !

“ Where the gray cypress shadows  
Move onward with the moon,  
Round the low mounded meadows,  
And the grave-stones, whitely hewn,  
Gleam like camp-fires through the night,  
There, in silence of long swoon,  
In the horror of decay ;  
With the worm for their delight,  
And the shroud for their array,

With the garland on their brow,  
And the black cross by their side,  
With the darkness for their beauty,  
And the dust for their pride,  
With the smile of baffled pain  
On the cold lips half apart,  
With the dimness on the brain,  
And the peace upon the heart ;  
Even sunk in solemn shade,  
Underneath the cypress tree,  
Lady Queen, there are laid  
Fairer than thee !”

## VIII.

It passed away, that melodie,  
But none the minstrel there could see ;  
The lady sat still calm of thought,  
Save that there rose a narrow spot  
Of crimson on her cheek ;  
But then, the words were far and weak,  
Perchance she heard them not.  
The crowd still listening, feared to speak,

And only mixed in sympathy  
Of pressing hand and wondering eye,  
    And left the lists all hushed and mute,  
For every wind of heaven had sunk  
    To that aerial lute.  
The ponderous banners, closed and shrunk,  
Down from their listless lances hung,  
The windless plumes were feebly flung.  
With lifted foot, the listening steed,  
    Did scarcely fret the fern,  
And the challenger on his charmed steed  
    Sat statue-like and stern,  
Till mixed with martial trumpet-strain,  
The herald's voice arose again,  
Proclaiming that Amboise's lord  
Dared by the trial of the sword,  
The bravest knights of France, to prove  
Their fairer dame or truer love,—  
And ere the brazen blast had died,  
That strange sweet singing voice replied,  
So wild that every heart did keep  
Its pulse to time the cadence deep :



## IX.

“ Where the purple swords are swiftest,  
‘ And the rage of death unreigned.  
Lord of battle, though thou liftest  
    Crest unstooped, and shield unstained,  
Vain before thy footsteps fail,  
Useless spear and rended mail,  
Shuddering from thy glance and blow,  
Earth’s best armies sink like snow ;  
Know thou this ; unmatched, unmet,  
Might hath children mightier yet.

The chapel vaults are deadly damp,  
    Their air is breathless all,  
The downy bats they clasp and cramp  
    Their cold wings to the wall ;  
The bright-eyed eft, from cranny and cleft,  
    Doth noiselessly pursue  
The twining light of the death-worms white,  
    In the pools of the earth dew ;

The downy bat,—the death-worm white,  
And the eft with its sable coil—  
They are company good for a sworded knight.  
In his rest from the battle toil ;  
The sworded knight is sunk in rest,  
With the cross-hilt in his hand ;  
But his arms are folded o'er his breast  
As weak as ropes of sand.  
His eyes are dark, his sword of wrath  
Is impotent and dim ;  
Dark lord, in this thy victor path,  
Remember him."

## X.

The sounds sunk deeply,—and were gone,  
And for a time the quiet crowd  
Hung on the long departing tone,  
Of wailing in the morning cloud,  
In spirit wondering and beguiled ;  
Then turned with steadfast gaze to learn  
What reeked he, of such warning wild—  
Amboise's champion stern.

But little to their sight betrayed  
The visor bars and plumage shade ;  
The nearest thought he smiled ;  
Yet more in bitterness than mirth,  
And held his eyes upon the earth  
With thoughtful gaze, half sad, half keen,  
As they would seek beneath the screen  
Of living turf and golden bloom,  
The secrets of its under tomb.

## XI.

A moment more, with burning look,  
High in the air his plume he shook,  
And waved his lance as in disdain,  
And struck his charger with the rein,  
And loosed the sword-hilt to his grasp,  
And closed the visor's grisly clasp,  
And all expectant sate and still ;  
The herald blew his summons shrill,  
Keen answer rose from list and tent,  
For France had there her bravest sent,

With hearts of steel, and eyes of flame,  
Full armed the knightly concourse came ;  
They came like storms of heaven set free,  
They came like surges of the sea,  
    Resistless, dark and dense,  
Like surges on a sable rock,  
They fell with their own fiery shock,  
    Dashed into impotence.  
O'er each encounter's rush and gloom,  
Like meteor rose Amboise's plume,  
As stubble to his calm career ;  
Crashed from his breast the splintered spear,  
Before his charge the war-horse reeled,  
And bowed the helm, and sunk the shield,  
And checked the heart, and failed the arm ;  
And still the herald's loud alarm  
    Disturbed the short delay—  
On, chevaliers ! for fame, for love,—  
For these dark eyes that burn above  
    The field of your affray !

## XII.

Six knights had fallen, the last in death,—  
Deeply the challenger drew his breath.  
The field was hushed,—the wind that rocked  
    His standard staff grew light and low.  
A seventh came not. He unlocked  
    His visor clasp, and raised his brow  
To catch its coolness. Marvel not  
If it were pale with weariness,  
For fast that day his hand had wrought  
    Its warrior work of victory ;  
Yet, one who loved him might have thought  
    There was a trouble in his eye,  
And that it turned in some distress  
    Unto the quiet sky.  
Indeed that sky was strangely still,  
And through the air unwonted chill  
    Hung on the heat of noon ;  
Men spoke in whispers, and their words  
Came brokenly, as if the chords  
    Of their hearts were out of tune ;

And deeper still, and yet more deep  
The coldness of that heavy sleep  
Came on the lulled air. And men saw  
In every glance, an answering awe  
Meeting their own with doubtful change  
Of expectation wild and strange.  
Dread marvel was it thus to feel  
The echoing earth, the trumpet-peal,  
The thundering hoof, the crashing steel,  
    Cease to a pause so dead,  
They heard the aspens moaning shiver,  
And the low tinkling of the river  
    Upon its pebble bed.  
The challenger's trump rang long and loud,  
And the light upon his standard proud  
    Grew indistinct and dun ;  
The challenger's trump rang long and loud,  
And the shadow of a narrow cloud  
    Came suddenly o'er the sun.

## XIII.

A narrow cloud of outline quaint,  
    Much like a human hand ;  
And after it, with following faint,  
    Came up a dull grey lengthening band  
    Of small cloud billows, like sea sand,  
And then out of the gaps of blue,  
Left moveless in the sky, there grew  
Long snaky knots of sable mist,  
Which counter winds did vex and twist,  
Knitted and loosed, and tossed and tore,  
Like passive weeds on that sandy shore ;  
And these seemed with their touch to infect  
The sweet white upper clouds, and checked  
Their pacing on the heavenly floor,  
    And quenched the light which was to them  
As blood and life, singing the while  
    A fitful requiem,  
Until the hues of each cloud isle  
    Sank into one vast veil of dread,  
    Coping the heaven as if with lead,

With drag'd pale edges here and there,  
 Through which the noon's transparent glare  
     Fell with a dusky red.  
 And all the summer voices sank  
     To let that darkness pass ;  
 The weeds were quiet on the bank,  
     The cricket in the grass ;  
 The merry birds the buzzing flies,  
     The leaves of many lips,  
 Did make their songs a sacrifice  
     Unto the noon eclipse.

## XIV.

The challenger's trump rang long and loud—  
     Hark ! as its notes decay !  
 Was it out of the earth—or up in the cloud ?—  
     Or an echo far away ?  
 Soft it came and none knew whence—  
 Deep, melodious and intense,  
     So lightly breathed, so wildly blown,  
 Distant it seemed—yet everywhere  
 Possessing all the infinite air—  
     One quivering trumpet tone !



With slow increase of gathering sway,  
Londer along the wind it lay ;  
It shook the woods, it pressed the wave,  
The guarding rocks through chasm and cave  
    Roared in their fierce reply.  
It rose, and o'er the lists at length  
Crashed into full tempestuous strength,  
Shook through its storm-tried turrets high  
    Amboise's mountain home,  
And the broad thunder-vaulted sky  
    Clanged like a brazen dome.

## XV.

Unchanged, unchilled in heart and eye ;  
The challenger heard that dread reply :  
His head was bowed upon his breast,  
And on the darkness in the west  
His glance dwelt patiently ;  
Out of that western gloom there came  
A small white vapor, shaped like flame,  
Unscattering, and on constant wing ;  
Rode lonely, like a living thing,

Upon its stormy path ; it grew,  
And gathered as it onward drew—  
It paused above the lists, a roof  
Inwoven with a lightning woof  
Of undulating fire, whose trace,  
Like corpse-fire on a human face,  
Was mixed of light and death ; it sank  
Slowly ; the wild war-horses shrank  
    Tame from the nearing flash ; their eyes  
Glared the blue terror back, it shone  
On the broad spears, like wavering wan  
    Of unaccepted sacrifice.  
Down to the earth the smoke-cloud rolled—  
Pale shadowed through sulphurous fold,  
Banner and armor, spear and plume  
Gleamed like a vision of the tomb.  
One form alone was all of gloom—  
In deep and dusky arms arrayed,  
Changeless alike through flash and shade,  
Sudden within the barrier gate  
Behold, the Seventh champion sate !

He waved his hand—he stooped his lance—  
 The challenger started from his trance ;  
 He plunged his spur—he loosed his rein—  
 A flash—a groan—a woman's cry—  
 And up to the receiving sky  
 The white cloud rose again !

## XVI.

The white cloud rose—the white cloud fled—  
 The peace of heaven returned in dew,  
 And soft and far the noontide shad  
 Its holiness of blue.  
 The rock, the earth, the wave, the brake  
 Rejoiced beneath that sweet succeeding ;  
 No sun nor sound can warm or wake  
 One human heart's unheeding.  
 Stretched on the dark earth's bosom, chill,  
 Amboise's lord lay stark and still.  
 The heralds raise him, but to mark  
 The last light leave his eyeballs dark—

The last blood dwindle on his cheek—  
 They turned ; a murmur wild and weak  
     Passed on the air, in passion broken,  
 The faint low sob of one in pain—  
     “ Lo ! the faith thou hast forgotten  
 Binds thee with its broken chain ! ”

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*PART FIFTH.*

I.

The mists, that mark the day's decline,  
     Have cooled and lulled the purple air ;  
 The bell, from Saint Cecilia's shrine,  
     Hath tolled the evening hour of prayer ;  
 With folded veil, and eyes that shed  
 Faint rays along the stones they tread,  
 And bosom stooped, and step subdued,  
 Came forth that ancient sisterhood ;  
 Each bearing on her lips along  
 Part of the surge of a low song,—  
 A wailing requiem, wildly mixed  
     With suppliant cry, how weak to win,

From home so far—from fate so fixed,

A Spirit dead in sin !

Yet yearly must they meet, and pray

For her who died—how long ago ?

How long—'twere only Love could know ;

And she, ere her departing day,

Had watched the last of Love's decay ;

Had felt upon her fading cheek

None but a stranger's sighs ;

Had none but stranger souls to seek

Her death-thoughts in her eyes ;

Had none to guard her couch of clay,

Or trim her funeral stone,

Save those, who, when she passed away,

Felt not the more alone.

## II.

And years had seen that narrow spot

Of death-sod levelled and forgot,

Ere question came of record kept,

Or how she died—or where she slept.

The night was wild, the moon was late—  
A lady sought the convent gate ;  
The midnight chill was on her breast,  
    The dew was on her hair,  
And in her eye there was unrest,  
    And on her brow despair ;  
She came to seek the face, she said,  
    Of one deep injured. One by one  
The gentle sisters came, and shed  
    The meekness of their looks upon  
Her troubled watch. “ I know them not,  
    I know them not,” she murmured still :  
“ Are then her face—her form forgot ? ”  
    “ Alas ! we lose not when we will  
The thoughts of an accomplished ill ;  
The image of our love may fade,  
But what can quench a victim’s shade ?

## III.

“ She comes not yet. She will not come.  
    I seek her chamber ; ” and she rose

With a quick start of grief, which some  
    Would have restrained ; but the repose  
Of her pale brow rebuked them. “ Back,”  
    She cried, “ the path,—the place,—I know,—  
Follow me not—though broad and black  
The night lies on that lonely track.  
There moves forever by my side  
A darker spirit for my guide ;  
A broader curse—a wilder woe,  
Must gird my footsteps as I go.”

## IV.

Sternly she spoke, and, shuddering, sought  
The cloister arches, marble-wrought,  
That send, through many a trembling shaft  
The deep wind's full, melodious draught,  
Round the low space of billowy turf  
Where funeral roses flash like surf,  
O'er those who share the convent grave,  
Laid each beneath her own green wave.

## V.

From stone to stone she passed, and spelt  
The letters with her fingers felt ;  
The stains of time are drooped across  
Those mouldering names, obscure with moss ;  
The hearts where once they deeply dwelt,  
With music's power to move and melt,  
Are stampless too—the fondest few  
Have scarcely kept a trace more true.

## VI.

She paused at length beside a girth  
Of osiers overgrown and old ;  
And with her eyes fixed on the earth,  
Spoke slowly and from lips as cold  
As ever met the burial mould.

## VII.

“I have not come to ask for peace  
From thee, thou unforgiving clay !  
The pangs that pass—the throbs that cease  
From such as thou, in their decay,



Bequeath them that repose of wrath

So dark of heart, so dull of ear,

That bloodless strength of sworded sloth,

That shows not mercy, knows not fear,

And keeps its death-smile of disdain

Alike for pity, as for pain.

But, galled by many a ghastly link,

That bound and brought my soul to thee,

I come to bid thy vengeance drink

The wine of this my misery.

Look on me as perchance the dead

Can look ; through soul and spirit spread

Before thee ; go thou forth, and tread

The lone fields of my life, and see

Those dark large flocks of restless pangs

They pasture, and the thoughts of thee,

That shepherd them, and teach their fangs

To eat the green, and guide their feet

To trample where the banks are sweet

And judge betwixt us, which is best,

My sleepless torture, or thy rest ;

And which the worthier to be wept,  
The fate I caused, or that I kept.  
I tell thee, that my steps must stain  
With more than blood, their path of pain ;  
And I would fold my weary feet  
More gladly in thy winding sheet,  
And wrap my bosom in thy shroud,  
And dash thy darkness on the crowd  
Of terrors in my sight, and sheathe  
Mine ears from their confusion loud,  
And cool my brain with cypress wreath  
More gladly from its pulse of blood,  
Than ever bride with orange bud  
Clouded her moony brow. Alas !  
This osier fence I must not pass.  
Wilt thou not thank me—that I dare  
To feel the beams and drink the breath  
That curse me out of Heaven, nor share  
The cup that quenches human care,  
The sacrament of death ;  
But yield thee this, thy living prey  
Of erring soul and tortured clay,

To feed thee, when thou com'st to keep  
Thy watch of wrath around my sleep,  
Or turn the shafts of daylight dim,  
With faded breast and frozen limb?

## VIII.

“Yet come, and be, as thou hast been,  
Companion ceaseless—not unseen,  
Though gloomed the veil of flesh between  
Mine eyes and thine, and fast and rife  
Around me flashed the forms of life :  
I knew them by their change—for one  
I did not lose, I could not shun,  
Through laughing crowd, and lighted room,  
Through listèd field, and battle's gloom,  
Through all the shapes and sounds that press  
The Path, or wake the Wilderness ;  
E'en when He came, mine eyes to fill,  
Whom Love saw solitary still,  
For ever, shadowy by my side,  
I heard thee murmur, watched thee glide ;  
But what shall now thy purpose bar ?  
The laughing crowd is scattered far,

The lighted hall is left forlorn,  
The listed field is white with corn,  
And he, beneath whose voice and brow  
I could forget thee—is—as thou."

## IX.

She spoke, she rose, and from that hour,  
The peasant groups that pause beside  
The chapel walls at eventide,  
To catch the notes of chord and song  
That unseen fingers form, and lips prolong,  
Have heard a voice of deeper power,  
Of wilder swell, and purer fall,  
More sad, more modulate, than all.  
It is not keen, it is not loud,  
But ever heard alone,  
As winds that touch on chords of cloud  
Across the heavenly zone,  
Then chiefly heard, when drooped and drowned  
In strength of sorrow, more than sound ;  
That low articulated rush  
Of swift, but secret passion, breaking

From sob to song, from gasp to gush ;  
Then failing to that deadly hush,  
That only knows the wilder waking—  
That deep, prolonged, and dream-like swell,  
So full that rose—so faint that fell,  
So sad—so tremulously clear—  
So checked with something worse than fear.  
Whose can they be ?  
Go, ask the midnight stars, that see  
The secrets of her sleepless cell,  
For none but God and they can tell  
What thoughts and deeds of darkened choice  
Gave horror to that burning voice—  
That voice, unheard save thus, untaught  
The words of penitence or prayer ;  
The grey confessor knows it not ;  
The chapel echoes only bear  
Its burst and burthen of despair ;  
And pity's voice hath rude reply,  
From darkened brow and downcast eye,  
That quench the question, kind or rash,  
With rapid shade, and reddening flash ;

Or, worse, with the regardless trance  
 Of sealèd ear, and sightless glance,  
 That fearful glance, so large and bright,  
 That dwells so long, with heed so light,  
 When far within, its fancy lies,  
 Nor movement marks, nor ray replies,  
 Nor kindling dawn, nor holy dew  
 Reward the words that soothe or sue.

## X.

Restless she moves ; beneath her veil  
 That writhing brow is sunk and shaded ;  
 Its touch is cold—its veins are pale—  
 Its crown is lost—its lustre faded ;  
 Yet lofty still, though scarcely bright,  
 Its glory burns beneath the blight  
 Of wasting thought, and withering crime,  
 And curse of torture and of time ;  
 Of pangs—of pride, endured—degraded—  
 Of guilt unchecked, and grief unaided :  
 Her sable hair is slightly braided,

Warm, like south wind, its foldings float  
Round her soft hands and marble throat ;  
How passive these, how pulseless this,

That love should lift, and life should warm !

Ah ! where the kindness, or the kiss,

Can break their dead and drooping charm !

Perchance they were not always so :

That breast hath sometimes movement deep,  
Timed like the sea that surges slow

Where storms have trodden long ago ;

And sometimes, from their listless sleep,

Those hands are harshly writhed and knit,

As grasping what their frenzied fit

Deemed peace to crush, or death to quit.

And then the sisters shrink aside ;

They know the words that others hear  
Of grace, or gloom—to charm or chide,

Fall on her inattentive ear,

As falls the snowflake on the rock,

That feels no chill, and knows no shock ;

Nor dare they mingle in her mood,  
So dark, and dimly understood ;  
And better so, if, as they say,  
'Tis something worse than solitude :  
For some have marked, when that dismay  
Had seemed to snatch her soul away,  
That in her eye's unquietness  
There shone more terror than distress ;  
And deemed they heard, when soft and dead,  
By night they watched her sleepless tread,  
Strange words addressed, beneath her breath,  
As if to one who heard in death,  
And, in the night wind's sound and sigh,  
Imagined accents of reply.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XI.

The sun is on his western march,  
His rays are red on shaft and arch ;  
With hues of hope their softness dyes  
The image with the lifted eyes,



Where, listening still, with trançèd smile,  
Cecilia lights the glimmering aisle ;  
So calm the beams that flushed her rest  
Of ardent brow, and virgin breast  
Whose chill they pierced, but not profaned,  
And seemed to stir, what scarce they stained,  
So warm the life, so pure the ray :  
Such she had stood, ere snatched from clay,  
When sank the tones of sun and sphere,  
Deep melting on her mortal ear ;  
And angels stooped, with fond control,  
To write the rapture on her soul.

## XII.

Two sisters, at the statue's feet,  
Paused in the altar's arched retreat,  
As risen but now from earnest prayer—  
One aged and grey—one passing fair ;  
In changeful gush of breath and blood,  
Mute for a time the younger stood ;  
Then raised her head and spoke : the flow  
Of sound was measured, stern, and slow ;

## XIII.

"Mother ! thou sayest she died in strife  
 Of heavenly wrath, and human woe ;  
 For me, there is not that in life  
 Whose loss could ask, or love could owe  
 As much of pang as now I show ;  
 But that the book which angels write  
 Within men's spirits day by day  
 That diary of judgment-light  
 That cannot pass away,  
 Which, with cold ear and glazing eye,  
 Men hear and read before they die,  
 Is open now before me set ;  
 Its drifting leaves are red and wet  
 With blood and fire, and yet, methought,  
 Its words were music, were they not  
 Written in darkness.

*I confess !*

Say'st thou ? The sea shall yield its dead,  
 Perchance my spirit its distress ;  
 Yet there are paths of human dread  
 That none but God should trace or tread ;

Men judge by a degraded law ;  
    With Him I fear not : He who gave  
The sceptre to the passion, saw  
    The sorrow of the slave.  
He made me, not as others are,  
    Who dwell, like willows by a brook,  
That see the shadow of one star  
    Forever with serenest look  
Lighting their leaves,—that only hear  
Their sun-stirred boughs sing soft and clear,  
And only live, by consciousness  
Of waves that feed, and winds that bless.  
Me—rooted on a lonely rock,  
    Amidst the rush of mountain rivers,  
He, doomed to bear the sound and shock  
Of shafts that rend and storms that rock,  
    The frost that blasts, and flash that shivers ;  
And I am desolate and sunk.  
A lifeless wreck—a leafless trunk,  
Smitten with plagues, and seared with sin,  
And black with rottenness within,

But conscious of the holier will  
That saved me long, and strengthens still.

## XIV.

Mine eyes are dim, they scarce can trace  
The rays that pierce this lonely place ;  
But deep within their darkness dwell  
A thousand thoughts they knew—too well.  
Those orb'd towers obscure and vast,\*  
That light the Loire with sunset last ;  
Those fretted groups of shaft and spire  
That crest Amboise's cliff with fire,  
When, far beneath, in moonlight fail  
The winds that shook the pausing sail ;  
The panes that tint with dyes divine  
The altar of St. Hubert's shrine ;  
The very stone on which I knelt ;  
    When youth was pure upon my brow,  
Though word I prayed, or wish I felt  
    I scarce remember now.

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\* Note, page 167.

Methought that there I bowed to bless  
A warrior's sword—a wanderer's way :  
Ah ! nearer now, the knee would press  
The heart for which the lips would pray.  
The thoughts were meek, the words were low—  
I deemed them free from sinful stain ;  
It might be so. I only know  
These were unheard, and those were vain.

## XV.

“ That stone is raised ;—where once it lay  
Is built a tomb of marble grey :\*  
Asleep within the sculptured veil  
Seems laid a knight in linkèd mail ;  
Obscurely laid in powerless rest,  
The latest of his line,  
Upon his casque he bears no crest,  
Upon his shield no sign.  
I've seen the day when through the blue  
Of broadest heaven his banner flew,

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\* Note, page 167.

And armies watched through farthest fight,  
The stainless symbol's stormy light

Wave like an angel's wing.

Ah ! now a scorned and scathèd thing,  
It's silken folds the worm shall fret,  
The clay shall soil, the dew shall wet,  
Where sleeps the sword that once could save,

And droops the arm that bore ;

Its hues must gird a nameless grave ;  
Nor wind shall wake, nor lance shall wave,

Nor glory gild it more :

For he is fallen—oh ! ask not how,

Or ask the angels that unlock

The inmost grave's sepulchral rock ;

I could have told thee once, but now

'Tis madness in me all, and thou

Wouldst deem it so, if I should speak.

And I am glad my brain is weak ;—

Ah, this is yet its only wrong,

To know too well—to feel too long.

## XVI.

“ But I remember how he lay  
When the rushing crowd were all away ;  
And how I called, with that low cry  
He never heard without reply ;  
And how there came no sound, nor sign,  
And the feel of his dead lips on mine ;  
And when they came to comfort me,  
I laughed, because they could not see  
The stain of blood, or print of lance,  
To write the tomb upon the trance.  
I saw, what they had heeded not,  
Above his heart a small black spot ;  
Ah, woe ! I knew how deep within  
That stamp of death, that seal of sin  
Had struck with mortal agony  
The heart so false—to all but me.

## XVII.

“ Mother, methinks my soul can say  
It loved as well as woman's may ;

And what I would have given, to gain  
 The answering love, to count were vain ;  
 I know not—what I gave I know—  
 My hope on high, my all below.  
 But hope and height of earth and heaven,  
 Or highest sphere to angels given,  
 Would I surrender, and take up  
 The horror of this cross and eup  
 I bear and drink, to win the thought  
 That I had failed in what I sought.  
 Alas ! I won—rejoiced to win  
 The love whose every look was sin,  
 Whose every dimly worded breath  
 Was but the distant bell of death  
 For her who heard, for him who spoke.

Ah ! though those hours were swift and few,  
 The guilt they bore, the vow they broke,  
 Time cannot punish—nor renew.

## XVIII.

“ They told me long ago that thou  
 Hadst seen, beneath this very shade



Of mouldering stone that wraps us now,  
The death of her whom he betrayed.  
Thine eyes are wet with memory,—  
In truth 'tis fearful sight to see  
E'en the last sands of sorrow run,  
Though the fierce work of death be done,  
And the worst woe that fate can will  
Bids but its victim to be still.  
But I beheld the darker years  
That first oppressed her beauty's bloom ;  
The sickening heart and silent tears  
That asked and eyed her early tomb ;  
I watched the deepening of her doom,  
As, pulse by pulse, and day by day,  
The crimson life-tint waned away  
And timed her bosom's quickening beat,  
That hastened only to be mute,  
And the short tones, each day more sweet,  
That made her lips like an Eolian lute,  
When winds are saddest ; and I saw  
The kindling of the unearthly awe

That touched those lips with frozen light,  
 The smile, so bitter, yet so bright,  
 Which grief, that sculptured, seals its own,  
 Which looks like life, but stays like stone ;  
 Which checks with fear the charm it gives,  
 And loveliest burns, when least it lives,—  
 All this I saw. Thou canst not guess  
 How woman may be merciless.  
 One word from me had rent apart  
 The chains that chafed her dying heart :  
 Closer I clasped the links of care,  
 And learned to pity—not to spare.

## XIX.

She might have been avenged ; for, when  
 Her woe was aidless among men,  
 And tooth of scorn and brand of shame  
 Had scared her spirit, soiled her name,  
 There came a stranger to her side,  
     Or—if a friend, forgotten long,  
 For hearts are frail, when hands divide.  
 There were who said her early pride

Had cast his love away with wrong ;  
But that might be a dreamer's song.  
He looked like one whom power or pain  
Had hardened, or had hewn, to rock  
That could not melt nor rend again,  
Unless the staff of God might shock,  
And burst the sacred waves to birth  
That deck with bloom the Desert's dearth--  
That dearth, that knows nor breeze, nor balm,  
Nor feet that print, nor sounds that thrill,  
Though cloudless was his soul, and calm,  
It was the Desert still ;  
And blest the wildest cloud had been  
That broke the desolate serene,  
And kind the storm, that farthest strewed  
Those burning sands of solitude.

## XX.

“Darkly he came, and in the dust  
Had writ, perchance, Amboise's shame :  
I knew the sword he drew was just,  
And in my fear a fiend there came ;

It deepened first, and then derided  
The madness of my youth ;  
I deemed not that the God, who guided  
The battle blades in truth,  
Could gather from the earth the guilt  
Of holy blood in secret spilt.

## XXI.

“I watched at night the feast flow high ;  
I kissed the cup he drank to die ;  
I heard at morn the trumpet call  
Leap cheerily round the guarded wall ;  
And laughed to think how long and clear  
The blast must be, for him to hear.  
He lies within the chambers deep,  
Beneath Amboise's chapel floor,  
Where slope the rocks in ridges steep,  
Far to the river shore ;  
Where thick the summer flowers are sown,  
And, even within the deadening stone,  
A living ear can catch the close  
Of gentle waves forever sent,

To soothe, with lull and long lament,  
That murdered knight's repose :  
And yet he sleeps not well ;—but I  
Am wild, and know not what I say ;—  
My guilt thou knowest—the penalty  
Which I have paid, and yet must pay,  
Thou canst not measure. O'er the day  
I see the shades of twilight float—  
My time is short. Believest thou not ?  
I know my pulse is true and light,  
My step is firm, mine eyes are bright ;  
Yet see they—what thou canst not see,  
The open grave, deep dug for me ;  
The vespers we shall sing to-night  
My burial hymn shall be :  
But what the path by which I go,  
My heart desires yet dreads to know.  
But this remember, (these the last  
Of words I speak for earthly ear :  
Nor sign nor sound my soul shall cast,  
Wrapt in its final fear) :

For him, forgiving, brave and true,  
 Whom timeless and unshrived I slew,  
 For him be holiest masses said,  
 And rites that sanctify the dead,  
 With yearly honor paid.  
 For her, by whom he was betrayed,  
 Nor blood be shed, nor prayer be made,—  
 The cup were death—the words were sin,  
 To judge the soul they could not win,  
 And fall in torture o'er the grave  
 Of one they could not wash, nor save.”

\* \* \* \* \*

## XXII.

The vesper beads are told and slipped,  
 The chant has sunk by choir and crypt.  
 That circle dark—they rise not yet ;  
 With downcast eyes, and lashes wet,  
     They linger, bowed and low ;  
 They must not part before they pray  
 For her who left them on this day  
     How many years ago !

## XXIII.

They knelt within the marble screen,  
Black-robed and moveless, hardly seen,  
Save by their shades that sometimes shook  
    Along the quiet floor,  
Like leaf-shades on a waveless brook  
    When the wind walks by the shore.  
The altar lights that burned between,  
Were seven small fire-shafts, white and keen,  
    Intense and motionless.  
They did not shake for breeze nor breath,  
    They did not change, nor sink, nor shiver ;  
They burned as burn the barbs of death  
    At rest within their angel's quiver.  
From lip to lip, in chorus kept,  
The sad sepulchral music swept,  
While *one* sweet voice unceasing led :  
Were there but mercy for the dead,  
Such prayer had power to soothe—to save—  
Ay, even beneath the binding grave ;

So pure the springs of faith that fill  
The spirit's fount, at last unsealed.  
A corpse's ear, an angel's will,  
That voice might wake, or wield.  
Keener it rose, and wilder yet,  
The lifeless flowers that wreath and fret  
Column and arch with garlands white,  
Drank the deep fall of its delight,  
Like purple rain at evening shed  
On Sestri's cedar-darkened shore,  
When all her sunlit waves lie dead,  
And far along the mountains fled,  
Her clouds forget the gloom they wore,  
Till winding vale and pasture low  
Pant underneath their gush and glow ;  
So sank, so swept, on earth and air,  
That single voice of passion'd prayer.  
The hollow tombs gave back the tone,  
The roof's grey shafts of stalwart stone  
Quivered like chords, the keen night blast  
Grew tame beneath the sound. Tis past :



That failing cry—how feebly flung !  
What charm is laid on her who sung ?  
    Slowly she rose—her eyes were fixed  
On the void, penetrable air ;  
    And in their glance was gladness mixed  
With terror, and an under glare :  
What human soul shall seize or share  
    The thoughts it might avow ?  
It might have been—ah ! is it now—  
    Devotion ?—or despair ?

## XXIV.

With steps whose short white flashes keep  
    Beneath the shade of her loose hair,  
With measured pace, as one in sleep  
    Who heareth music in the air,  
She left the sister's circle deep  
Their anxious eyes of troubled thought  
Dwelt on her but she heeded not ;  
Fear struck and breathless as they gazed,  
    Before her steps their ranks divided ;  
Her hand was given—her face was raised

As if to one who watched and guided—  
Her form emerges from the shade ;  
Lo ! she will cross, where full displayed  
Against the altar light 'tis thrown ;  
She crosses now—but not alone.

Who leads her ? Lo ! the sisters shrink  
Back from that guide with limbs that sink,  
And eyes that glaze, and lips that blench ;

For, seen where broad the beams were cast  
By what it dimmed, but did not quench,

A dark, veiled form there passed—  
Veiled with the nun's black robe, that shed  
Faint shade around its soundless tread ;  
Moveless and mute the folds that fell,  
Nor touch can change, nor breeze repel.  
Deep to the earth its head was bowed,  
Its face was bound with the white shroud ;  
One hand upon its bosom pressed—  
One seemed to lead its mortal guest ;  
The hand it held lay bright and bare,  
Cold as itself, and deadly fair.

What oath had bound the fatal troth  
Whose horror seems to seal them both ?  
Each powerless in the grasp they give,  
This to release, and that to live.

## XXV.

Like sister sails, that drift by night  
Together on the deep,  
Seen only where they cross the light  
That pathless waves must pathlike keep  
From fisher's signal fire, or pharos steep.

## XXVI.

Like two thin wreaths that autumn dew  
Hath framed of equal pacèd cloud,  
Whose shapes the hollow night can shroud,  
Until they cross some caverned place  
Of moon illumined blue,  
That live an instant, but must trace  
Their onward way, to waste and wane  
Within the sightless gloom again,

Where, scattered from their heavenly pride  
Nor star nor storm shall gild or guide,—  
So shape and shadow, side by side  
The consecrated light had crossed.  
Beneath the aisle an instant lost,  
Behold ! again they glide  
Where yonder moonlit arch is bent  
Above the marble steps' descent,—  
Those ancient steps, so steep and worn,  
Though none descend, unless it be  
Bearing, or borne, to sleep, or mourn,  
The faithful or the free.  
The shade yon bending cypress cast,  
Stirred by the weak and tremulous air,  
Kept back the moonlight as they passed.  
The rays returned : they were not there.  
Who follows ? Watching still, to mark  
If ought returned—(but all was dark)  
Down to the gate, by two and three,  
The sisters crept, how fearfully !

They only saw, when there they came,  
 Two wandering tongues of waving flame,  
 O'er the white stones, confusedly strewed  
 Across the field of solitude.

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NOTES.

Stanza II. Line 4.

“The image with the lifted eyes.”—I was thinking of the St. Cecilia of Raphael at Bologna, turned into marble—were it possible—where so much depends on the entranced darkness of the eyes. The shrine of St. Cecilia is altogether imaginary; she is not a favorite saint in matters of dedication. I don't know why.

Stanza XIV. Line 5.

“Those orbèd towers, obscure and vast.”—The circular tower, in Amboise, is so large as to admit of a spiral ascent in its interior, which two horsemen may ride up abreast. The chapel, which crowns the precipice, though small, is one of the loveliest bits of rich detail in France. It is terminated by a wooden spire. It is dedicated to St. Hubert, a grotesque piece of carving above the entrance representing his rencontre with the sacred stag.

Stanza XV. Line 2.

“Is built a tomb of marble grey.”—There is no such tomb now in existence, the chapel being circular, and unbroken in design; in fact, I

have my doubts whether there ever was anything of the kind, the lady being slightly too vague in her assertions to deserve unqualified credit.

Stanza XXI. Line 42.

“Nor blood be shed.”—In the sacrifices of masses the priest is said to offer Christ for the quick and dead.

Stanza XXIII. Line 26.

“Like purple rain.”—I never saw such a thing but once, on the mountains of Sestri, in the gulf of Genoa. The whole western half of the sky was one intense amber color, the air crystalline and cloudless, the other half, grey with drifting showers. At the instant of sunset, the whole mass of rain turned of a deep rose-color, the consequent rainbow being not varied with the seven colors, but one broad belt of paler rose; the other tints being so delicate as to be overwhelmed by the crimson of the rain.

## THE TEARS OF PSAMMENITUS.

[CAMBYSES, the son of Cyrus, made war on Psammenitus of Egypt, and deposed him. His sons were sentenced to death, his daughters to slavery. He saw his children pass to death and to dishonor without apparent emotion, but *wept* on observing a noble, who had been his companion, ask alms of the Persians. Cambyses sent to inquire the reason of his conduct. The substance of his reply was as follows :—]

SAY ye I wept ? I do not know :—

There came a sound across my brain,  
Which was familiar long ago ;  
And through the hot and crimson stain  
That floods the earth and chokes the air,  
I saw the waving of white hair—  
The palsy of an aged brow ;  
I should have known it once, but now  
One desperate hour hath dashed away  
The memory of my kingly day.

Mute, weak, unable to deliver  
That bowed distress of passion pale,  
I saw that forehead's tortured quiver,  
And watched the weary footstep fail,  
With just as much of sickening thrill  
As marked my heart was human still ;  
Yes, though my breast is bound and barred  
With pain, and though that heart is hard,  
And though the grief that should have bent  
Hath made me, what ye dare not mock,  
The being of untamed intent,  
Between the tiger and the rock,  
There's that of pity's outward glow  
May bid the tear atone,  
In mercy to another's woe  
For mockery of its own ;  
It is not cold,—it is not less,  
Though yielded in unconsciousness.  
And it is well that I can weep,  
For in the shadow, not of sleep,  
Through which, as with a vain endeavor,  
These aged eyes must gaze forever,



Their tears can cast the only light  
That mellows down the mass of night ;  
For they have seen the curse of sight  
My spirit guards the dread detail  
And wears their vision like a veil.  
They saw the low Pelusian shore  
Grow warm with death and dark with gore.

When on those widely watered fields,  
Shivered and sunk, betrayed, oppressed,  
Ionian sword and Carian crest,\*

And Egypt's shade of shields :  
They saw, oh God ! they still must see  
That dream of long dark agony,  
A vision passing, never past,  
A troop of kingly forms, that cast  
Cold quivering shadows of keen pain  
In bars of darkness o'er my brain :  
I see them move,—I hear them tread,  
Each his untroubled eyes declining,

---

\* The Ionians and Carians were faithful auxiliaries of the Egyptian kings, from the beginning of the reign of Psammenitus. The helmet crest was invented by the Carians.

Though fierce in front, and swift and red  
     The Eastern sword is sheathless shining.  
 I hear them tread,—the earth doth not !  
 Alas ! its echoes have forgot  
 The fiery steps that shook the shore  
 With their swift pride in days of yore.  
     In vain, in vain, in wrath arrayed,  
 Shall Egypt wave her battle blade ;  
 It cannot cleave the dull-death shade,  
 Where, sternly checked and lowly laid,  
 Despised, dishonored, and betrayed,  
 That pride is past, those steps are stayed.  
 Oh ! would I were as those who sleep  
     In yonder island lone and low.\*  
 Beside whose shore, obscure and deep,  
     Sepulchral waters flow,  
 And wake, with beating pause, like breath,  
 Their pyramidal place of death ;

---

\* Under the hill, on which the pyramids of Cheops were erected, were excavated vaults, around which a stream from the Nile was carried by a subterraneous passage. These were sepulchres for the kings, and Cheops was buried there himself.—HEROD., II., 187.

For it is cool and quiet there,  
And on the calm frankincensed clay  
Passes no change, and this despair  
Shrinks like the baffled worm, their prey  
Alike impassive. I forget

The thoughts of him who sent ye here :  
Bear back these words, and say, though yet  
The shade of this unkingly fear  
Hath power upon my brow, no tear  
Hath quenched the curse within mine eyes,  
And by that curse's fire,

I see the doom that shall possess  
His hope, his passion, his desire,  
His life, his strength, his nothingness.

I see across the desert led,\*  
A plumèd host, on whom distress  
Of fear and famine hath been shed ;

---

\* Cambyses, after subduing Egypt, led an army against the Ethiopians. He was checked by famine. Persisting in his intention, until the troops were obliged to kill every tenth man for food, he lost the greater part of his army.

Before them lies the wilderness,  
Behind, along the path they tread,  
If death make desolation less,  
There lie a company of dead  
Who cover the sand's hot nakedness  
With a cool moist bed of human clay,  
A soil and a surface of slow decay :  
Through the dense and lifeless heap  
Irregularly rise  
Short shuddering waves that heave and creep,  
Like spasms that plague the guilty sleep,  
And where the motion dies,  
A moaning mixes with the purple air,  
They have not fallen in fight ; the trace  
Of war hath not passed by ;  
There is no fear on any face,  
No wrath in any eye.  
They have laid them down with bows unbent,  
With swords unfleshed and innocent,  
In the grasp of that famine whose gradual thrill  
Is fiercest to torture and longest to kill :

Stretched in one grave on the burning plain  
Coiled together in knots of pain,  
Where the dead are twisted in skeleton writhe,  
With the mortal pangs of the living and lithe ;  
Soaking into the sand below,  
With the drip of the death-dew, heavy and slow,  
Mocking the heaven that heard no prayer,  
With the lifted hand and the lifeless stare—  
With the lifted hand, whose tremorless clay,  
Though powerless to combat, is patient to pray.  
And the glance that reflects, in its vain address,  
Heaven's blue from its own white lifelessness ;  
Heaped for a feast on the venomous ground,  
For the howling jackal and herded hound ;  
With none that can watch and with few that will weep  
By the home they have left, or the home they must  
    keep,  
The strength hath been lost from the desolate land,  
Once fierce as the simoon, now frail as the sand.  
Not unavenged : their gathered wrath  
Is dark along its desert path,

Nor strength shall bide, nor madness fly  
The anger of their agony,  
    For every eye, though sunk and dim,  
And every lip, in its last need,  
    Hath looked and breathed a plague on him  
Whose pride they fell to feed.  
The dead remember well and long,  
And they are cold of heart and strong,  
They died, they cursed thee ; not in vain !  
Along the river's reedy plain  
Behold a troop,—a shadowy crowd—  
Of godlike spectres, pale and proud ;  
In concourse calm they move and meet,  
The desert billows at their feet,  
Heave like the sea when, deep distressed,  
The waters pant in their unrest.  
Robed in a whirl of pillared sand  
    Avenging Ammon glides supreme ;\*

---

\* Cambyses sent 50,000 men to burn the temple of the Egyptian Jove or Ammon. They plunged into the desert and were never heard of more. It was reported they were overwhelmed with sand.

The red sun smoulders in his hand  
And round about his brows, the gleam,  
As of a broad and burning fold  
Of purple wind, is wrapt and rolled.\*  
With failing frame and lingering tread,  
Stern Apis follows, wild and worn ; †  
The blood by mortal madness shed,  
Frozen on his white limbs anguish-torn.  
What soul can bear, what strength can brook  
The God-distress that fills his look ?  
The dreadful light of fixed disdain,  
The fainting wrath, the flashing pain  
Bright to decree or to confess  
Another's fate—its own distress—

---

\* The simoon is rendered visible by its purple tone of color.

† The god Apis occasionally appeared in Egypt under the form of a handsome bull. He imprudently visited his worshippers immediately after Cambyses had returned from Ethiopia with the loss of his army and reason. Cambyses heard of his appearance, and insisted on seeing him. The officiating priests introduced Cambyses to the bull. The king looked with little respect on a deity whose divinity depended on the number of hairs in his tail, drew his dagger, wounded Apis in the thigh, and scourged all the priests. Apis died. From that time the insanity of Cambyses became evident, and he was subject to the violent and torturing passions described in the succeeding lines.

A mingled passion and appeal,  
Dark to inflict and deep to feel.

Who are these that flitting follow  
Indistinct and numberless ?

As through the darkness, cold and hollow,  
Of some hopeless dream, there press  
Dim, delirious shapes that dress  
Their white limbs with folds of pain ;  
See the swift mysterious train—

Forms of fixed, embodied feeling,  
Fixed, but in a fiery trance,  
Of wildering mien and lightning glance,  
Each its inward power revealing  
Through its quivering countenance ;  
Visible living agonies,

Wild with everlasting motion,  
Memory with her dark dead eyes,  
Tortured thoughts that useless rise,  
Late remorse and vain devotion,  
Dreams of cruelty and crime,  
Unmoved by rage, untamed by time,



Of fierce design, and fell delaying,  
    Quenched affection, strong despair  
Wan disease, and madness playing  
    With her own pale hair.  
The last, how woeful and how wild !  
    Enrobed with no diviner dread  
Than that one smile, so sad, so mild,  
    Worn by the human dead ;  
A spectre thing, whose pride of power  
    Is vested in its pain  
Becoming dreadful in the hour  
    When what it seems was slain.  
Bound with the chill that checks the sense,  
    It moves in spasm-like spell :  
It walks in that dead impotence,  
    How weak, how terrible !  
Cambyses, when thy summoned hour  
Shall pause on Ecbatana's Tower,  
Though barbed with guilt, and swift, and fierce,  
Unnumbered pangs thy soul shall pierce

The last, the worst thy heart can prove,  
Must be that brother's look of love ; \*  
That look that once shone but to bless,  
Then changed, how mute, how merciless !  
His blood shall bathe thy brow, his pain  
Shall bind thee with a burning chain,  
His arms shall drag, his wrath shall thrust  
Thy soul to death, thy throne to dust ;  
Thy memory darkened with disgrace,  
Thy kingdom wrested from thy race, †  
Condemned of God, accursed of men,  
Lord of my grief, remember then,  
The tears of him—who will not weep again.

---

\* Cambyses caused his brother Smerdis to be slain ; suspecting him of designs on the throne. This deed he bitterly repented of on his death-bed, being convinced of the innocence of his brother.

† Treacherously seized by Smerdis the Magus, afterwards attained by Darius Hystaspes, through the instrumentality of his groom. Cambyses died in the Syrian Ecbatana, of a wound accidentally received in the part of the thigh where he had wounded Apis.

## THE TWO PATHS.

### I.

THE paths of life are rudely laid  
    Beneath the blaze of burning skies ;  
Level and cool, in cloistered shade,  
    The church's pavement lies.  
Along the sunless forest glade  
    Its gnarled roots are coiled like crime,  
Where glows the grass with freshening blade,  
    Thine eyes may track the serpent slime ;  
But there thy steps are unbetrayed,  
    The serpent waits a surer time.

### II.

The fires of earth are fiercely blent,  
    Its suns arise with scorching glow ;  
The church's light hath soft descent,  
    And hues like God's own bow.

The brows of men are darkly bent,  
Their lips are wreathed with scorn and guile ;  
But pure, and pale, and innocent  
The looks that light the marble aisle—  
From angel eyes, in love intent,  
And lips of everlasting smile,

## III.

Lady, the fields of earth are wide,  
And tempt an infant's foot to stray :  
Oh ! lead thy loved one's steps aside,  
Where the white altar lights his way.  
Around his path shall glance and glide,  
A thousand shadows false and wild ;  
Oh ! lead him to that surer Guide,  
Than sire, serene, or mother mild,  
Whose childhood quelled the age of pride,  
Whose Godhead called the little child.

## IV.

So when thy breast of love untold,  
That warmed his sleep of infancy,

Shall only make the marble cold,  
    Beneath his aged knee ;  
From its steep throne of heavenly gold  
    Thy soul shall stoop to see  
His grief, that cannot be controlled,  
    Turning to God from thee—  
Cleaving with prayer the cloudy fold,  
    That veils the sanctuary.

## THE OLD WATER-WHEEL.

It lies beside the river ; where its marge  
Is black with many an old and oarless barge,  
And yeasty filth, and leafage wild and rank  
Stagnate and batten by the crumbling bank.

Once, slow revolving by the industrious mill,  
It murmured, only on the Sabbath still ;  
And evening winds its pulse-like beating bore  
Down the soft vale, and by the winding shore.

Sparkling around its orbèd motion flew,  
With quick, fresh fall, the drops of dashing dew,  
Through noon-tide heat that gentle rain was flung,  
And verdant round the summer herbage sprung.

Now dancing light and sounding motion cease,  
In these dark hours of cold continual peace ;

Through its black bars the unbroken moonlight flows,  
And dry winds howl about its long repose ;

And mouldering lichens creep, and mosses grey  
Cling round its arms, in gradual decay,  
Amidst the hum of men—which doth not suit  
That shadowy circle, motionless and mute.

So, by the sleep of many a human heart,  
The crowd of men may bear their busy part,  
Where withered, or forgotten, or subdued,  
Its noisy passions have left solitude.

Ah, little can they trace the hidden truth !  
What waves have moved it in the vale of youth !  
And little can its broken chords avow  
How they once sounded. All is silent now.

## THE DEPARTED LIGHT.

THOU know'st the place where purple rocks receive  
The deepened silence of the pausing stream ;  
And myrtles and white olives interweave  
Their cool grey shadows with the azure gleam  
Of noontide ; and pale temple columns cleave  
Those waves with shafts of light (as through a dream  
Of sorrow, pierced the memories of loved hours—  
Cold and fixed thoughts that will not pass away)  
All chapleted with wreaths of marble flowers,  
Too calm to live,—too lovely to decay.  
And hills rise round, pyramidal and vast,  
Like tombs built of blue heaven, above the clay  
Of those who worshipped here, whose steps have past  
To silence—leaving o'er the waters cast  
The light of their religion. There, at eve,  
That gentle dame would walk, when night-birds make



The starry myrtle blossoms pant and heave  
With waves of ceaseless song ; she would awake  
The lulled air with her kindling thoughts, and leave  
Her voice's echo on the listening lake ;  
The quenched rays of her beauty would deceive  
Its depths into quick joy. Hill, wave, and brake  
Grew living as she moved : I did believe  
That they were lovely, only for her sake ;  
But now—she is not there—at least, the chill  
Hath passed upon her which no sun shall break.  
Stranger, my feet must shun the lake and hill :—  
Seek them,—but dream not they are lovely still.

## AGONIA.

WHEN our delight is desolate,  
And hope is overthrown ;  
And when the heart must bear the weight  
Of its own love alone ;

And when the soul, whose thoughts are deep,  
Must guard them unrevealed,  
And feel that it is full, but keep  
That fullness calm and sealed ;

When love's long glance is dark with pain—  
With none to meet or cheer ;  
And words of woe are wild in vain  
For those who cannot hear ;

When earth is dark and memory  
Pale in the heaven above,—  
The heart can bear to lose its joy,  
But not to cease to love.

But what shall guide the choice within,  
Of guilt or agony,—  
When to remember is to sin,  
And to forget—to die !

## THE LAST SONG OF ARION.

*ἰὼ λιγείας μορον ἀηδόνος*

*\* \* \* κύκνου δίκην*

*τόν ὕστατον μέλψασα θανασιμον γόον.*

THE circumstances which led to the introduction of Arion to his Dolphin are differently related by Herodotus and Lucian. Both agree that he was a musician of the highest order, born at Methymna, in the island of Lesbos, and that he acquired fame and fortune at the court of Periander of Corinth. Herodotus affirms that he became desirous of seeing Italy and Sicily, and having made a considerable fortune in those countries, hired a Corinthian vessel to take him back to Corinth. When halfway over the gulf the mariners conceived the idea of seizing the money and throwing the musician into the sea.

Arion started several objections, but finding that they were overruled, requested that he might be permitted to sing them a song.

Permission being granted he wreathed himself and his harp with flowers, sang, says Lucian, in the sweetest way in the world, and leaped into the sea.

The historian proceeds with less confidence to state that a dolphin carried him safe ashore. Lucian agrees with this account except in one particular: he makes no mention of the journey to Sicily, and supposes Arion to have been returning from Corinth to his native Lesbos when the attack was made on him. I have taken him to Sicily with

Herodotus, but prefer sending him straight home. He is more interesting returning to his country than paying his respects at the court of Corinth.

## I.

Look not upon me thus impatiently,  
Ye children of the deep ;  
My fingers fail, and tremble as they try  
To stir the silver sleep with song,  
Which underneath the surge ye sweep,  
These lulled and listless chords must keep—  
Alas—how long !

## II.

The salt sea wind has touched my harp ; its thrill  
Follows the passing plectrum, low and chill,  
Woe for the wakened pulse of Ocean's breath,  
That injures these with silence—me with death.  
Oh wherefore stirred the wind on Pindus's chain,  
When joyful morning called me to the main ?  
Flashed the keen oars—our canvas filled and free,  
Shook like white fire along the purple sea,

Fast from the helm the shattering surges flew,  
Pale gleamed our path along their cloven blue ;  
And orient path, wild wind and purple wave,  
Pointed and urged and guided to the grave.

## III.

Ye winds ! by far Methymna's steep,  
I loved your voices long,  
And gave your spirits power to keep  
Wild syllables of song,  
When, folded in the crimson shade  
That veils Olympus' cloud-like whiteness,  
The slumber of your life was laid  
In the lull of its own lightness,  
Poised on the voiceless ebb and flow  
Of the beamy-billowed summer snow,  
Still at my call ye came—  
Through the thin wreaths of undulating flame  
That panting in their heavenly home,  
With crimson shadows flush the foam  
Of Adramyttium, round the ravined hill,  
Awakened with one deep and living thrill,

Ye came and with your steep descent,  
The hollow forests waved and bent,  
    Their leaf-lulled echoes caught the winding call.  
Through incensed glade and rosy dell,  
Mixed with the breath-like pause and swell  
    Of waters following in eternal fall,  
In azure waves, that just betray  
The music quivering in their spray  
Beneath its silent seven-fold arch of day  
    High in pale precipices hung  
    The lifeless rocks of rigid marble rung,  
•Waving the cedar crests along their brows sublime,  
    Swift ocean heard beneath, and flung  
His tranced and trembling waves in measured time  
Along his golden sands with faintly falling chime.

## IV.

Alas ! had ye forgot the joy I gave,  
    That ye did hearken to my call this day ?  
Oh ! had ye slumbered—when your sleep could save,  
    I would have fed you with sweet sound for aye,  
    Now ye have risen to bear my silent soul away.

## V.

I heard ye murmur through the Etnæan caves,  
When joyful dawn had touched the topmost dome,  
I saw ye light along the mountain waves  
Far to the east, your beacon fires of foam,  
And deemed ye rose to bear your weary minstrel home.  
Home ? it shall be that home indeed,  
Where tears attend and shadows lead  
The steps of man's return ;  
Home ! woe is me, no home I need,  
Except the urn.  
Behold—beyond these billows' flow,  
I see Methymna's mountains glow ;  
Long, long desired, their peaks of light  
Flash on my sickened soul and sight,  
And heart and eye almost possess  
Their vales of long lost pleasantness ;  
But eye and heart, before they greet  
That land, shall cease to burn and beat.  
I see, between the sea and land,  
The winding belt of golden sand :



But never may my footsteps reach  
The brightness of that Lesbian beach,  
Unless, with pale and listless limb,  
Stretched by the water's utmost brim,  
Naked, beneath my native sky,  
With bloodless brow, and darkened eye,  
An unregarded ghastly heap,  
For bird to tear and surge to sweep,  
Too deadly calm—too coldly weak  
To reck of billow, or of beak.

## VI.

My native isle ! When I have been  
Reft of my love, and far from thee  
My dreams have traced, my soul hath seen  
Thy shadow on the sea,  
And waked in joy, but not to seek  
Thy winding strand, or purple peak.  
For strand and peak had waned away  
Before the desolating day,  
On Acro-Corinth redly risen,

That burned above Ægina's bay,  
 And laughed upon my palace prison.  
 How soft on other eyes it shone,  
 When light, and land, were all their own,  
 I looked across the eastern brine,  
 I knew *that* morning was not mine.

## VII.

But thou art near me now, dear isle !  
 And I can see the lightning smile  
 By thy broad beach, that flashes free  
 Along the pale lips of the sea.  
 Near, nearer, louder, breaking, beating,  
 The billows fall with ceaseless shower ;  
 It comes,—dear isle !—our hour of meeting—  
 Oh God ! across the soft eyes of the hour  
 Is thrown a black and blinding veil ;  
 Its steps are swift, its brow is pale,  
 Before its face, behold—there stoop,  
 From their keen wings, a darkening troop  
 Of forms like unto it—that fade  
 Far in unfathomable shade,

Confused, and limitless, and hollow,  
It comes, but there are none that follow,—  
It pauses, as they paused, but not  
Like them to pass away,  
For I must share its shadowy lot,  
And walk with it, where wide and grey,  
That caverned twilight chokes the day,  
And, underneath the horizon's starless line,  
Shall drink, like feeble dew, its life and mine.

## VIII.

Farewell, sweet harp ! for lost and quenched  
Thy swift and sounding fire shall be ;  
And these faint lips be mute and blenched,  
That once so fondly followed thee.  
Oh ! deep within the winding shell  
The slumbering passions haunt and dwell,  
As memories of its ocean tomb  
Still gush within its murmuring gloom ;  
But closed the lips and faint the fingers  
Of fiery touch, and woven words,

To rouse the flame that clings and lingers  
    Along the loosened chords.  
Farewell ! thou silver-sounding lute,  
    I must not wake thy wildness more,  
When I and thou lie dead, and mute,  
    Upon the hissing shore.

## IX.

The sounds I summon fall and roll  
In waves of memory o'er my soul ;  
And there are words I should not hear,  
That murmur in my dying ear,  
Distant all, but full and clear,  
Like a child's footstep in its fear,  
    Falling in Colono's wood  
When the leaves are sere ;  
    And waves of black, tumultuous blood  
Heave and gush about my heart,  
    Each a deep and dismal mirror  
Flashing back its broken part  
    Of visible, and changeless terror ;

And fiery foam-globes leap and shiver  
Along that crimson, living river ;  
Its surge is hot, its banks are black,  
And weak, wild thoughts that once were bright,  
And dreams, and hopes of dead delight,  
Drift on its desolating track,  
And lie along its shore :  
Oh ! who shall give that brightness back,  
Or those lost hopes restore ?  
Or bid that light of dreams be shed  
On the glazed eye-balls of the dead ?

## X.

That light of dreams ! my soul hath cherished  
One dream too fondly, and too long,  
Hope—dread—desire—delight have perished,  
And every thought whose voice was strong  
To curb the heart to good or wrong ;  
But that sweet dream is with me still  
Like the shade of an eternal hill,  
Cast on a calm and narrow lake,

That hath no room except for it—and heaven :

It doth not leave me, nor forsake ;  
And often with my soul hath striven  
To quench or calm its worst distress,  
Its silent sense of loneliness.

And must it leave me now ?

Alas ! dear lady, where my steps must tread,

What veils the echo or the glow  
That word can leave, or smile can shed,  
Among the soundless, lifeless dead ?  
Soft o'er my brain the lulling dew shall fall,  
While I sleep on, beneath the heavy sea,  
Coldly,—I shall not hear though thou shouldst call.  
Deeply,—I shall not dream,—not e'en of thee.

XI.

And when my thoughts to peace depart

Beneath the unpeaceful foam,

Wilt thou remember him, whose heart

Hath ceased to be thy home ?

Nor bid thy breast its love subdue

For one no longer fond nor true ;

Thine ears have heard a treacherous tale,  
My words were false,—my faith was frail.

I feel the grasp of death's white hand

Laid heavy on my brow,

And from the brain those fingers brand,

The chords of memory drop like sand,

And faint in muffled murmurs die,

The passionate word, the fond reply,

The deep redoubled vow.

Oh ! dear Ismene flushed and bright,

Although thy beauty burn,

It cannot wake to love's delight

The crumbling ashes quenched and white,

Nor pierce the apathy of night

Within the marble urn :

Let others wear the chains I wore,

And worship at the unhonored shrine—

For me, the chain is strong no more,

No more the voice divine :

Go forth, and look on those that live,

And robe thee with the love they give.

But think no more of mine :

Or think of all that pass thee by,  
With heedless heart and unveiled eye,  
That none can love thee *less* than I.

## XII.

Farewell ; but do not grieve ; thy pain  
    Would seek me where I sleep,  
Thy tears would pierce like rushing rain,  
    The stillness of the deep.  
Remember, if thou wilt, but do not weep.  
Farewell, beloved hills, and native isle.  
Farewell to earth's delight to heaven's smile ;  
Farewell to sounding air, to purple sea ;  
Farewell to light,—to life,—to love,—to thee.



## THE HILLS OF CARRARA.\*

### I.

AMIDST a vale of springing leaves,

Where spreads the vine its wandering root,

And cumbrous fall the autumnal sheaves,

And olives shed their sable fruit,

And gentle winds, and waters never mute,

Make of young boughs and pebbles pure

One universal lute,

And bright birds, through the myrtle copse obscure,

Pierce with quick notes, and plumage dipped in dew,

The silence and the shade of each lulled avenue.

### II.

Far in the depths of voiceless skies,

Where calm and cold the stars are strewed,

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\* The mountains of Carrara, from which nearly all the marble now used in sculpture is derived, form by far the finest piece of hill scenery I know in Italy. They rise out of valleys of exquisite richness, being themselves singularly desolate, magnificent in form and noble in elevation, but without forests on their flanks and without one blade of grass on their summits.

The peaks of pale Carrara rise.

Nor sound of storm, nor whirlwind rude,  
Can break their chill of marble solitude ;

The crimson lightnings round their crest  
May hold their fiery feud—

They hear not, nor reply ; their chasmed rest  
No flowret decks, nor herbage green, nor breath  
Of moving thing can change their atmosphere of death.

## III.

But far beneath, in folded sleep,  
Faint forms of heavenly life are laid,

With pale brows and soft eyes, that keep  
Sweet peace of unawakened shade,

Whose wreathed limbs, in robes of rock arrayed,  
Fall like white waves on human thought,

In fitful dreams displayed ;  
Deep through their secret homes of slumber sought,  
They rise immortal, children of the day,  
Gleaming with godlike forms on earth, and her decay.

## IV.

Yes, where the bud hath brightest germ,

And broad the golden blossoms glow,

There glides the snake and works the worm

And black the earth is laid below.

Ah ! think not thou the souls of men to know ;

By outward smiles in wildness worn ;

The words that jest at woe

Spring not less lightly, though the heart be torn,

The mocking heart, that scarcely dares confess

Even to itself, the strength of its own bitterness.

Nor deem that they whose words are cold,

Whose brows are dark, have hearts of steel,

The couchant strength, untraced, untold,

Of thoughts they keep and throbs they feel,

May need an answering music to unseal,

Who knows what waves may stir the silent sea,

Beneath the low appeal

From distant shores, of winds unfelt by thee ?

What sounds may wake within the winding shell,

Responsive to the charm of those who touch it well !

## THE BATTLE OF MONTENOTTE.

“My patent of nobility” (said Napoleon) “dates from the Battle of Montenotte.”

### I.

SLOW lifts the night her starry host  
Above the mountain chain  
That guards the grey Ligurian coast,  
And lights the Lombard plain ;  
That plain, that softening on the sight  
Lies blue beneath the balm of night,  
With lapse of rivers lulled, that glide  
In lustre broad of living tide,  
Or pause for hours of peace beside  
The shores they double, and divide,  
To feed with heaven's reverted hue  
The clustered vine's expanding blue :

With crystal flow, for evermore,  
They lave a blood-polluted shore ;  
Ah ! not the snows, whose wreaths renew  
Their radiant depth with stainless dew,  
Can bid their banks be pure, or bless  
The guilty land with holiness.

## II.

In stormy waves, whose wrath can reach  
The rocks that back the topmost beach,  
The midnight sea falls wild and deep  
Around Savona's marble steep,  
    And Voltri's crescent bay.  
What fiery lines are these, that flash  
Where fierce the breakers curl and crash,  
    And fastest flies the spray ?  
No moon has risen to mark the night,  
Nor such the flakes of phosphor light  
That wake along the southern wave,  
By Baia's cliff and Capri's cave,  
    Until the dawn of day :

The phosphor flame is soft and green  
Beneath the hollow surges seen ;  
But these are dyed with dusky red  
Far on the fitful surface shed ;  
And evermore, their glance between,  
The mountain gust is deeply stirred  
With low vibration, felt, and heard,  
Which winds and leaves confuse, in vain,  
It gathers through their maze again,  
Redoubling round the rocks it smote,  
Till falls in fear the night-bird's note,  
And every sound beside is still,  
But plash of torrent from the hill,  
And murmur by the branches made  
That bend above its bright cascade.

## III.

Hark, hark ! the hollow Apennine  
Laughs in his heart afar ;  
Through all his vales he drinks like wine  
The deepening draught of war ;

For not with doubtful burst, or slow,  
That thunder shakes his breathless snow,  
But ceaseless rends, with rattling stroke,  
The veils of white volcano-smoke  
That o'er Legino's ridges rest,  
And writhe in Merla's vale :  
There lifts the Frank his triple crest,  
Crowned with its plumage pale,  
Though, clogged and dyed with stains of  
death,  
It scarce obeys the tempest's breath,  
And darker still, and deadlier press  
The war-clouds on its weariness.  
Far by the bright Bormida's banks  
The Austrian cheers his chosen ranks,  
In ponderous waves, that, where they check  
Rise o'er their own tumultuous wreck,  
Recoiling—crashing—gathering still  
In rage around that Island hill,  
Where stand the moveless few—  
Few—fewer as the moments flit :

Though shaft and shell their columns split  
     As morning melts the dew,  
 Though narrower yet their guarding grows,  
 And hot the heaps of carnage close,  
 In death's faint shade and fiery shock,  
 They stand, one ridge of living rock,  
 Which steel may rend, and wave may wear,  
 And bolt may crush, and blast may tear,  
     But none can strike from its abiding.  
 The flood, the flash, the steel, may bear  
 Perchance destruction—not despair,  
     And death—but not dividing.  
 What matter? while their ground they keep,  
 Though here a column—there an heap—  
 Though these in wrath—and those in sleep,  
     If all are *there*.

## IV.

Charge, D'Argenteau! Fast flies the night,  
 The snows look wan with inward light:  
 Charge, D'Argenteau! Thy kingdom's power  
 Wins not again this hope, nor hour:



The force—the fate of France is thrown  
    Behind those feeble shields,  
That ridge of death-defended stone  
    Were worth a thousand fields !  
In vain—in vain ! Thy broad array  
Breaks on their front of spears like spray  
Thine hour hath struck—the dawning red  
Is o'er thy wavering standards shed ;  
    A darker dye thy folds shall take  
Before its utmost beams can break.

## v.

Out of its Eastern fountains  
    The river of day is drawn,  
And the shadows of the mountains  
    March downward from the dawn,—  
The shadows of the ancient hills  
    Shortening as they go,  
Down beside the dancing rills  
    Wearily and slow.

The morning wind the mead hath kissed ;  
    It leads in narrow lines  
The shadows of the silver mist,  
    To pause among the pines.  
But where the sun is calm and hot,  
    And where the wind hath peace,  
There is a shade that pauseth not,  
    And a sound that doth not cease.  
The shade is like a sable river  
    Broken with sparkles bright ;  
The sound is like dead leaves that shiver  
    In the decay of night.

## VI.

Together came with pulse-like beat  
    The darkness, and the tread ;  
A motion calm—a murmur sweet,  
    Yet deathful both, and dread ;  
Poised on the hill, a fringed shroud,  
    It wavered like the sea,  
Then clove itself, as doth a cloud,  
    In sable columns three.

They fired no shot—they gave no sign,—  
They blew no battle peal,  
But down they came, in deadly line,  
Like whirling bars of steel.  
As fades the forest from its place,  
Beneath the lava flood,  
The Austrian host, before their face,  
Was melted into blood :  
They moved, as moves the solemn night,  
With lulling, and release,  
Before them, all was fear and flight,  
Behind them, all was peace :  
Before them flashed the roaring glen  
With bayonet and brand ;  
Behind them lay the wrecks of men,  
Like sea-weed on the sand.

## VII.

But still, along the cumbered heath,  
A vision strange and fair  
Did fill the eyes that failed in death,  
And darkened in despair ;

Where blazed the battle wild and hot  
 A youth, deep-eyed and pale,  
 Did move amidst the storm of shot,  
 As the fire of God through hail,  
 He moved, serene as spirits are,  
 And dying eyes might see  
 Above his head a crimson star  
 Burning continually.

\* \* \* \* \*

VIII.

With bended head, and breathless tread,  
 The traveller tracks that silent shore,  
 Oppressed with thoughts that seek the dead,  
 And visions that restore,  
 Or lightly trims his pausing bark,  
 Where lies the ocean lulled and dark,  
 Beneath the marble mounds that stay  
 The strength of many a bending bay,  
 And lace with silver lines the flow  
 Of tideless waters to and fro,  
 As drifts the breeze, or dies.

That scarce recalls its lightness, left  
In many a purple-curtained cleft,  
Whence to the softly lighted skies  
Low flowers lift up their dark blue eyes,  
To bring by fits the deep perfume  
Alternate, as the bending bloom  
Diffuses or denies.

Above, the slopes of mountain shine,  
Where glows the citron, glides the vine,  
And breathes the myrtle wildly bright,  
And aloes lift their lamps of light,  
And ceaseless sunbeams clothe the calm  
Of orbèd pine and vaulted palm,  
Dark trees, that sacred order keep,  
And rise in temples o'er the steep—  
Eternal shrines, whose columned shade  
Though winds may shake, and frosts may fade,  
And dateless years subdue,  
Is softly builded, ever new,

By angel hands, and wears the dread  
And stillness of a sacred place.

A sadness of celestial grace,  
A shadow, God-inhabited.

## IX.

And all is peace, around, above,  
The air all balm—the light all love,  
Enduring love, that burns and broods  
Serenely o'er these solitudes,  
Or pours at intervals a part  
Of Heaven upon the wanderer's heart,  
Whose subject sold and quiet thought  
Are open to be touched or taught,  
By mute address of bud and beam  
Of purple peak and silver stream—  
By sounds that fall at nature's choice,  
And things whose being is their voice,  
Innumerable tongues that teach  
The will and ways of God to men,  
In waves that beat the lonely beach,  
And winds that haunt the homeless glen,  
Where they, who ruled the rushing deep,  
The restless and the brave,

Have left along their native steep  
The ruin, and the grave.

## X.

And he who gazes while the day  
Departs along the boundless bay,  
May find against its fading streak  
The shadow of a single peak,  
Seen only when the surges smile,  
And all the heaven is clear,  
That sad and solitary isle.\*  
Where, captive, from his red career,  
He sank—who shook the hemisphere,  
Then, turning from the hollow sea,  
May trace, across the crimsoned height  
That saw his earliest victory,  
The purple rainbow's resting light,  
And the last lines of storm that fade  
Within the peaceful evening-shade.

---

\* Elba.

## NOTES.

## STANZA 3.—Line 9.

*That o'er Legino's ridges rest.*

The Austrian centre, 10,000 strong, had been advanced to Montenotte in order, if possible, to cut asunder the French force which was following the route of the Corniche. It encountered at Montenotte, only Colonel Rampon, at the head of 1,200 men, who, retiring to the redoubt at Monte Legino, defended it against the repeated attacks of the Austrians until nightfall—making his soldiers swear to conquer or die. The Austrian General Roccavina was severely wounded, and his successor, D'Argenteau, refused to continue the attack. Napoleon was lying at Savona, but set out after sunset with the divisions of Massena and Serrurier, and occupied the heights at Montenotte. At daybreak the Imperialists found themselves surrounded on all sides, and were totally defeated, with the loss of two thousand prisoners, and above one thousand killed and wounded. [April 12, 1796.]

This victory, the first gained by Napoleon, was the foundation of the success of the Italian campaign. Had Colonel Rampon been compelled to retire from Monte Legino, the fate of the world would probably have been changed.—*Vide* Alison, ch. 20.

## STANZA 7.—Line 6.

*Where lies the ocean lulled and dark.*

The view given in the engraving, though not near the scene of the battle, is very characteristic of the general features of the coast. The ruins in the centre are the Chateau de Cornolet, near Mentoni: the sharp dark promontory running out beyond, to the left, is the Capo St. Martin; that beyond it is the promontory of Monaco. Behind the



hills, on the right, lies the Bay of Nice and the point of Antibes. The dark hills in the extreme distance rise immediately above Frejus. Among them winds the magnificent Pass de L'Esterelle, which, for richness of southern forest scenery, and for general grace of mountain outline, surpasses anything on the Corniche itself.

STANZA 9.—Line 7.

*That solitary isle.*

Elba is said to be visible from most of the elevated points of this coast. From the citadel of Genoa I have seen what was asserted to be Elba. I believe it to have been Corsica.

## A WALK IN CHAMOUNI.

TOGETHER on the valley, white and sweet,  
The dew and silence of the morning lay :  
Only the tread of my disturbing feet  
Did break with printed shade and patient beat  
The crispèd stillness of the meadow way ;  
And frequent mountain waters, welling up  
In crystal gloom beneath some mouldering stone,  
Curdled in many a flower-enamelled cup  
Whose soft and purple border, scarcely blown,  
Budded beneath their touch, and trembled to their tone.

The fringed branches of the swinging pines  
Closed o'er my path ; a darkness in the sky,  
That barred its dappled vault with rugged lines,  
And silver network,\*—interwoven signs

---

\* The white mosses on the meleze, when the tree is very old, are singularly beautiful, resembling frost-work of silver.

Of dateless age and deathless infancy ;  
Then through their aisles a motion and a brightness  
Kindled and shook—the weight of shade they bore  
On their broad arms, was lifted by the lightness  
Of a soft, shuddering wind, and what they wore  
Of jewelled dew, was strewed about the forest floor.  
That thrill of gushing wind and glittering rain  
Onward amid the woodland hollows went,  
And bade by turns the drooping boughs complain  
O'er the brown earth, that drank in lightless stain  
The beauty of their burning ornament ;  
And then the roar of an enormous river  
Came on the intermittent air uplifted,  
Broken with haste, I saw its sharp waves shiver,  
And its wild weight in white disorder drifted,  
Where by its beaten shore the rocks lay heaped and rifted.  
  
But yet unshattered, from an azure arch\*  
Came forth the nodding waters, wave by wave,

---

\* Source of the Arveron.

In silver lines of modulated march,  
 Through a broad desert, which the frost-winds parch  
     Like fire, and the resounding ice-falls pave  
 With pallid ruin—wastes of rock—that share  
     Earth's calm and ocean's fruitlessness.\*—Undone  
 The work of ages lies,—through whose despair  
     Their swift procession dancing in the sun,  
     The white and whirling waves pass mocking one by one.

And with their voice—unquiet melody—  
     Is filled the hollow of their mighty portal,  
 As shells are with remembrance of the sea ;  
 So might the eternal arch of Eden be  
     With angels' wail for those whose crowns immortal  
 The grave-dust dimmed in passing. There are here,  
     With azure wings, and scymitars of fire,  
 Forms as of Heaven, to guard the gate, and rear  
     Their burning arms afar,—a boundless choir  
     Beneath the sacred shafts of many a mountain spire.

---

\* παρά θῆν' ἀλὸς ἀτρογγέτοιο.—LILAΔ. Α'

Countless as clouds, dome, prism, and pyramid

Pierced through the mist of morning scarce withdrawn,  
Signing the gloom like beacon fires, half hid  
By storm—part quenched in billows—or forbid

Their function by the fullness of the dawn :  
And melting mists and threads of purple rain  
Fretted the fair sky where the east was red,  
Gliding like ghosts along the voiceless plain,  
In rainbow hues around its coldness shed,  
Like thoughts of loving hearts that haunt about the dead.

And over these, as pure as if the breath

Of God had called them newly into light,  
Free from all stamp of sin, or shade of death,  
With which the old creation travaileth,  
Rose the white mountains, through the infinite  
Of the calm, concave heaven : inly bright  
With lustre everlasting and intense,  
Serene and universal as the night,  
But yet more solemn with pervading sense  
Of the deep stillness of omnipotence.

Deep stillness ! for the throbs of human thought,  
Count not the lonely night that pauses here,  
And the white arch of morning findeth not  
By chasm or alp, a spirit, or a spot,  
Its call can waken, or its beams can cheer :  
There are no eyes to watch, no lips to meet  
Its messages with prayer—no matin bell  
Touches the delicate air with summons sweet ;—  
That smoke was of the avalanche ;\* that knell  
Came from a tower of ice that into fragments fell.

Ah ! why should that be comfortless—why cold,  
Which is so near to Heaven ? The lowly earth  
Out of the blackness of its charnel mould  
Feeds its fresh life, and lights its banks with gold ;  
But these proud summits, in eternal dearth,  
Whose solitudes nor mourning know, nor mirth,

---

\* The vapor or dust of dry snow which rises after the fall of a large avalanche, sometimes looks in the distance not unlike the smoke of a village.

Rise passionless and pure, but all unblest :

Corruption—must it root the brightest birth ?

And is the life that bears its fruitage best,

One neither of supremacy nor rest ?

## THE OLD SEAMAN.

### I.

You ask me why mine eyes are bent  
So darkly on the sea,  
While others watch the azure hills  
That lengthen on the lee.

### II.

The azure hills—they soothe the sight  
That fails along the foam ;  
And those may hail their nearing height  
Who there have hope, or home.

### III.

But I a loveless path have trod—  
A beaconless career ;  
My hope hath long been all with God,  
And all my home is—here.



## IV.

The deep by day, the heaven by night,  
Roll onward swift and dark ;  
Nor leave my soul the dove's delight,  
Of olive branch, or ark.

## V.

For more than gale, or gulf, or sand,  
I've proved that there may be  
Worse treachery on the steadfast land,  
Than variable sea.

## VI.

A danger worse than bay or beach—  
A falsehood more unkind—  
The treachery of a governed speech,  
And an ungoverned mind.

## VII.

The treachery of the deadly mart  
Where human souls are sold ;  
The treachery of the hollow heart  
That crumbles as we hold.

## VIII.

Those holy hills and quiet lakes—  
Ah ! wherefore should I find  
This weary fever-fit, that shakes  
Their image in my mind.

## IX.

The memory of a streamlet's din,  
Through meadows daisy-drest—  
Another might be glad therein,  
And yet I cannot rest.

## X.

I cannot rest unless it be  
Beneath the churchyard yew ;  
But God, I think, hath yet for me  
More earthly work to do.

## XI.

And therefore with a quiet will,  
I breathe the ocean air,  
And bless the voice that calls me still  
To wander and to bear.

## XII.

Let others seek their native sod,  
Who there have hearts to cheer ;  
My soul hath long been given to God,  
And all my home is—here.

## THE ALPS.

SEEN FROM MARENGO.

THE glory of a cloud—without its wane ;  
The stillness of the earth—but not its gloom ;  
The loveliness of life—without its pain ;  
The peace—but not the hunger of the tomb !  
Ye Pyramids of God ! around whose bases  
The sea foams noteless in his narrow cup ;  
And the unseen movements of the earth send up  
A murmur which your lulling snow effaces  
Like the deer's footsteps. Thrones imperishable !  
About whose adamantine steps the breath  
Of dying generations vanisheth,  
Less cognizable than clouds ; and dynasties,  
Less glorious and more feeble than the array  
Of your frail glaciers, unregarded rise,  
Totter and vanish. In the uncounted day,

When earth shall tremble as the trump unwraps  
Their sheets of slumber from the crumbling dead,  
And the quick, thirsty fire of judgment laps  
The loud sea from the hollow of his bed—  
Shall not your God spare *you*, to whom He gave  
No share nor shadow of man's crime, or fate ;  
Nothing to render, nor to expiate ;  
Untainted by his life—untrusted with his grave ?

## WRITTEN AMONG THE BASSES ALPS.

[It is not among mountain scenery that human intellect usually takes its finest temper, or receives its highest development; but it is at least there that we find a consistent energy of mind and body, compelled by severer character of agencies to be resisted and hardships to be endured; and it is there that we must seek for the last remnants of patriarchal simplicity and patriotic affection—the few rock fragments of manly character that are yet free from the lichenous stain of over-civilization. It must always, therefore, be with peculiar pain that we find, as in the district to which the following verses allude, the savageness and seclusion of mountain life, without its force and faithfulness: and all the indolence and sensuality of the most debased cities of Europe, without the polish to disguise, the temptation to excuse, or the softness of natural scenery to harmonize with them.]

“Why stand ye here all the day idle?”

HAVE you in heaven no hope—on earth no care—

No foe in hell—ye things of stye and stall,

That congregate like flies, and make the air

Rank with your fevered sloth—that hourly call

The sun, which should your servant be, to bear

Dread witness on you, with uncounted wane

And unregarded rays, from peak to peak  
Of piny-gnomoned mountain moved in vain?  
Behold, the very shadows that ye seek  
For slumber, write along the wasted wall  
Your condemnation. They forget not, they,  
Their ordered function and determined fall,  
Nor useless perish. But *you* count your day  
By sins, and write your difference from clay  
In bonds you break and laws you disobey.  
God! who hast given the rocks their fortitude,  
The sap unto the forests, and their food  
And vigor to the busy tenantry  
Of happy soulless things that wait on Thee,  
Hast Thou no blessing where Thou gav'st Thy blood?  
Wilt Thou not make Thy fair creation whole?  
Behold and visit this Thy vine for good—  
Breathe in this human dust its living soul.

## THE GLACIER.

THE mountains have a peace which none disturb—

The stars and clouds a course which none restrain—

The wild sea-waves rejoice without a curb,

And rest without a passion ; but the chain

Of Death, upon this ghastly cliff and chasm

Is broken evermore, to bind again,

Nor lulls nor looses. Hark ! a voice of pain

Suddenly silenced ;—a quick passing spasm,

That startles rest, but grants not liberty,—

A shudder, or a struggle, or a cry—

And then sepulchral stillness. Look on us,

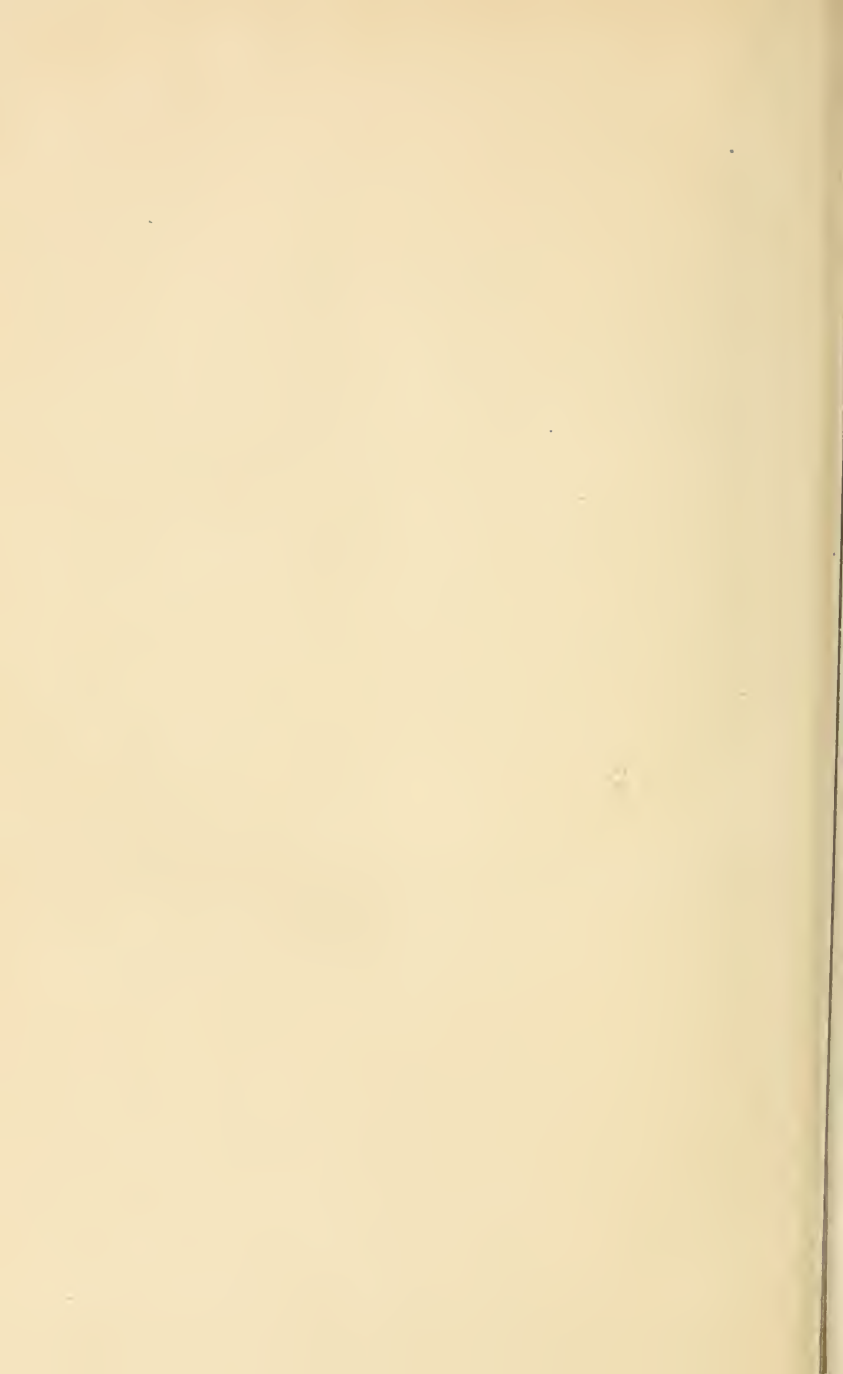
God ! who hast given these hills their place of pride,

If Death's captivity be sleepless thus,

For those who sink to it unsanctified.







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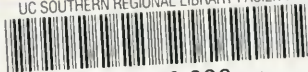
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